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# REPORT OF THE Cornwall Inquiry

**PHASE 2  
VOICES FROM  
INFORMAL  
TESTIMONY**

**VOLUME 1  
VOLUME 2  
VOLUME 3  
VOLUME 4**

**The Honourable G. Normand Glaude  
Commissioner**



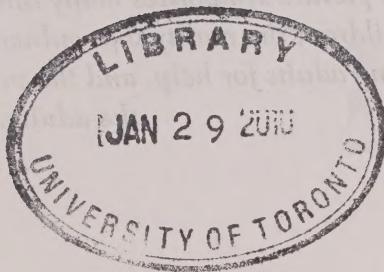
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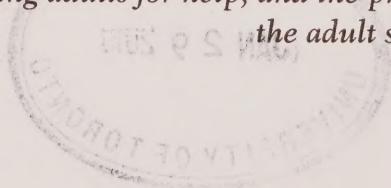
REPORT OF THE  
Cornwall  
Inquiry





The artist of this poignant sketch is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

*This picture symbolizes many things: the responsibility of adults for children, the reality that vulnerable children and youth depend on caring adults for help, and the presence of the abused child within the adult survivor.*



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## **Dedication and Appreciation**

This volume is dedicated to those whose courage in "telling of their life journey" touched and humbled all of us. It was an honour to provide support in various capacities in the informal testimony process.

*Mike Church*

*Patrick Lechasseur*

Counselling *Anna DeVuono*

*Angela Long*

Services *Jan Handy*

*Lori Loseth*

Workplace *Ben Hoffman*

*Phil Murray*

Education *Peter Jaffe*

*Colleen Parrish*

Care for Humans and Children in Care *Gail Kaneb*

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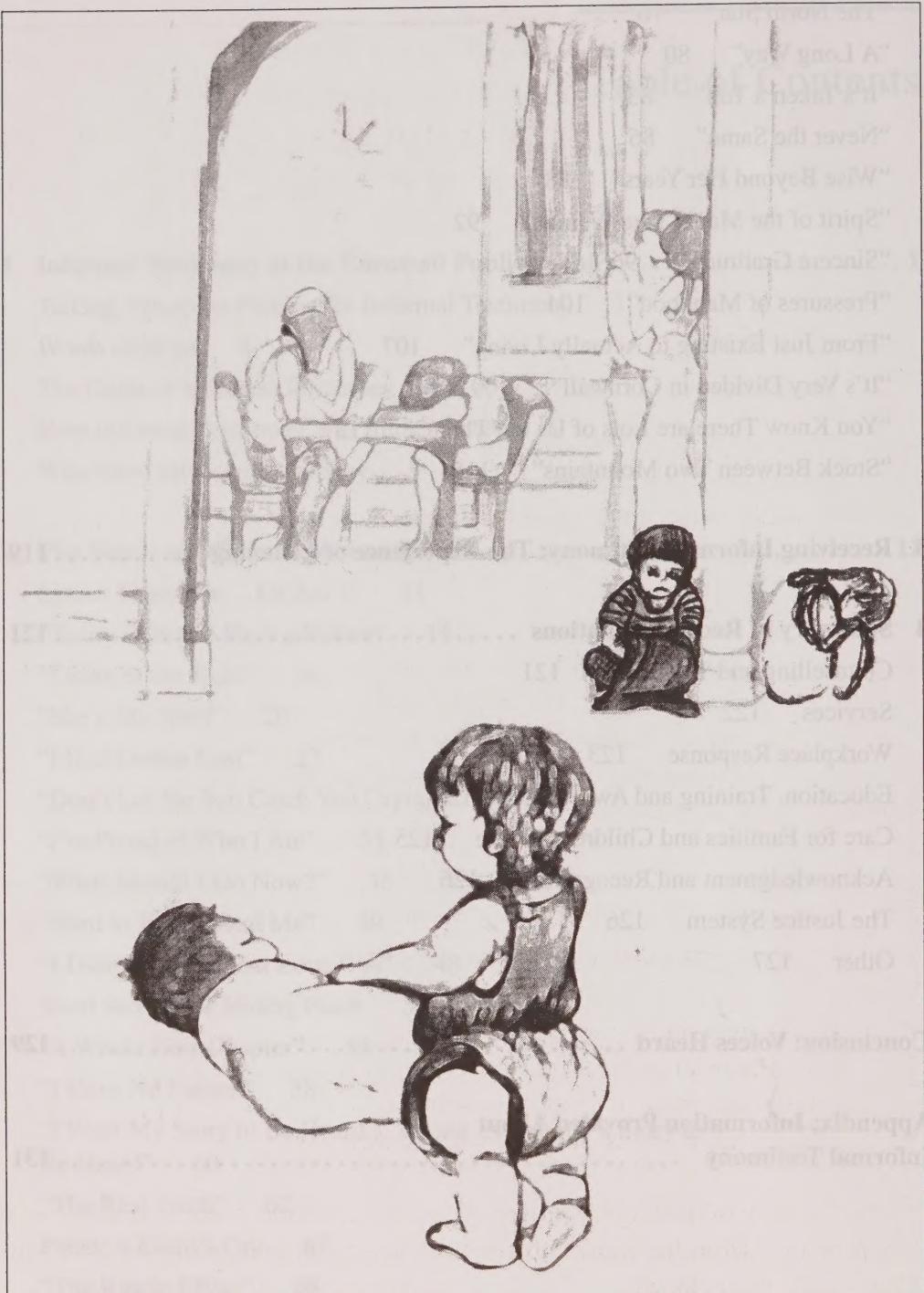
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The artist of this stark pencil sketch recalls her own childhood, conveying the feeling that adults were not listening and responding to the needs of vulnerable children, leaving children to fend for themselves.

## Informal Testimony at the Cornwall Public Inquiry

### Talking About the Process for Informal Testimony

The Cornwall Public Inquiry was established to inquire into and report on the response of the justice system and other public institutions in relation to allegations of historical abuse of children and young people in Cornwall. The evidentiary hearings in Phase 1 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry afforded opportunity for the creation of an extensive evidentiary record following legally sanctioned processes, such as advance disclosure of documents, examination, and cross-examination. The focus of Phase 1 was on the response of institutions to reports of sexual abuse of children or young people. The work in Phase 1 could not extend to determining whether abuse happened or if any individual was criminally responsible. However, the Order-in-Council establishing the Cornwall Public Inquiry also created discretion to find ways for people to talk about their life journey, including incidents of abuse, the impact of abuse on individuals, and the effect of allegations of abuse for those in the community of Cornwall:

The Commissioner may provide ... other opportunities apart from formal evidentiary hearings for individuals affected by the allegations of historical abuse of young people in the Cornwall area to express their experiences of events and the impact on their lives.<sup>1</sup>

As the work of the Inquiry progressed, it was clear that there were those who could benefit from the more informal processes referenced in the Order-in-Council. These included:

- those who could not testify in the Phase 1 evidentiary hearings because they did not report their allegations to any institution and could not

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1. Order-in-Council 558/2005, April 14, 2005.

testify regarding the institutional response, the core mandate of this Inquiry;

- those who were not emotionally ready to testify in Phase 1 of this Inquiry;
- those who had testified in Phase 1 but felt they could not say all they wanted about what happened and the subsequent impact on them;
- family members or other supporters of those affected by this Inquiry or by incidents that were the subject matter of this Inquiry who might want to describe their experiences;
- those affected in their employment situation who might have insights into the wider impact on the workplace; and
- those who wanted to talk about aspects of this Inquiry that affected them or experiences they had with services ancillary to this Inquiry.

Just as it was clear that there were those who wanted an alternative process in Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry, it was also clear that designing that process would be very difficult. The combination of high expectations for the process and the position taken by some party counsel that no process should go ahead at all made finding a reasonable approach difficult.

As a result, a formal consultation on informal testimony was undertaken. This is how it worked:

- A consultation paper was released to all parties, posted on our website, [www.cornwallinquiry.ca](http://www.cornwallinquiry.ca), under “Phase 2,” and mailed to everyone on the Phase 2 mailing list.
- Inquiry staff met with counsel for the parties on several occasions.
- Specific days were set aside in November 2007 for those who wanted to come and talk about the possibility of informal testimony with members of the Inquiry’s Advisory Panel, and there was a “drop-in” on November 29 and 30, 2007.
- Those interested could also contact the Director of Policy and she would document their viewpoints, preferences, and concerns for consideration.

Consultation occurred from November 1, 2007, to February 4, 2008. The intention was to give sufficient feedback for a decision to be made by me and announced in the spring of 2008.

The consultation process involved looking at possible models for informal testimony; timing issues; the type of appropriate environment for informal

testimony; attendance of support persons, counsellors and lawyers; use of recordings; examples of types of summaries for informal testimony; and processes for approving summaries. A key issue in consultation was who would hear the informal testimony: the Commissioner of this Inquiry, members of my Advisory Panel, or independent caring professionals. Another key issue was whether individuals giving informal testimony could identify themselves or others.

The consultation paper was very detailed about the mechanics of possible models for informal testimony, so that there was concrete information to respond to. This was useful in, for example, determining the appropriate physical environment for informal non-evidentiary testimony, because this Inquiry heard directly about the preferences of potential participants.

Following the consultation process, I made a decision. At the end of March 2008, in a public statement, I set out my reasons for deciding that my Advisory Panel should receive informal testimony, which would occur in the summer and fall of 2008. At that time, I said:

I believe strongly that supporting an individual in talking about their experiences can have a therapeutic effect. One of the consultation options would have engaged me personally in this process. And there were many, including parties to this Inquiry, who thought this was important. However, with regret, I have come to the conclusion that it is not practical for me to be directly involved. And so we are proceeding with another process that will serve those who will take the opportunity to tell their story privately in Phase 2.

What we have heard in consultation did persuade me that the healing purpose of telling one's story is better done by someone who is not already in an adjudicative role. And, by pursuing an option that does not involve the Commissioner of this Inquiry, we are able to offer the opportunity to tell one's story much sooner, and to give people more time to give their informal testimony, if they need it. The need for more time was another message that came from consultation.

My Advisory Panel told me that many said to them that having to wait many months to start this process was frustrating. As a result, they supported a process that could start this summer—not next year. I have listened to that advice in coming to a decision. This decision also has the advantage of allowing us to work concurrently in Phase 1 and 2, and this supports an earlier report date.

During the ensuing months, the details for implementation of informal testimony were further developed, keeping in mind what had been said in consultation about the physical and emotional environment needed for informal testimony and the review and approval processes needed for summaries.

In May of 2008, I made a further statement regarding informal testimony. I stressed several key points:

- The process of informal testimony will be private for those giving details of their personal story.
- The information provided in informal testimony could not be used in civil litigation or to make any findings of wrongdoing at this Inquiry.
- I would consider Phase 2 recommendations made during informal testimony and what was said would inform my Phase 2 recommendations. I would read all the informal testimony summaries but not until I had completed making my findings on Phase 1.

This last decision was to reassure those who were concerned that Phase 2 informal testimony could impact findings of misconduct that I could make in Phase 1. Having completed an extensive process of consultation on informal testimony at the Cornwall Public Inquiry, we turned to making informal testimony a reality.

## Words of Hope

These are some of the words that opened one informal testimony session:

We thank you, Creator, for this day that we have here together. We ask you to guide us through this day as we do the things that we are going to do here and to hear the things we are going to hear, and to help us to provide support for our sister who has come to do this for herself and to be able to put it away and keep on with her journey. She's come a long way, Creator, to do these things and for her to go through this today is very important.

## The Goals of Informal Testimony

This opening statement in many ways reflects some of the goals behind informal testimony: to honour and respect each person's story, to support that person, and

respect the courage each person has shown in addressing important and painful issues in his or her life.

The specific goals for informal testimony in Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry were:

- to ensure that the public was aware of the opportunity for informal testimony—we hoped that people who had not testified in Phase 1 would come forward;
- to create a positive experience in informal testimony that contributes to personal healing, greater understanding, and personal growth; and
- to produce a collection of anonymous summaries as part of the Phase 2 Report of the Cornwall Public Inquiry that will be a meaningful and respectful testament to those who participated and will provide additional understanding for the public.

In terms of why an individual would choose informal testimony, the words of one person who gave informal testimony give the strongest explanation:

At the time of the abuse, I was a child. I was not in a position to get help or go to authorities on my own. It has only been recently that I have had the degree of stability and support to address my past. I felt I had “no voice.” Part of going forward constructively is to speak up for myself and disclose the abuse I suffered, and the life-long consequences of this abuse.

I believe the goals for informal testimony were met. I particularly commend to everyone the words of those who gave informal testimony, as reflected in their summaries.

## **How Informal Testimony Was Implemented**

To meet the goals for informal testimony, there were three key areas for implementation:

- setting up an appropriate venue;
- communications; and
- registration.

We were fortunate in finding a venue for informal testimony that met the needs for the appropriate kind of space, as expressed and requested by

those involved in consultation. We were told that it was important that informal testimony occur in a place that was both private and welcoming—not institutional or court-like. The Phase 2 staff found a private space in the annex of a building that was home to a well-regarded social service agency in Cornwall. I am grateful to this agency for subletting this space to this Inquiry. It was on a residential street, had ample secluded parking, was wheelchair accessible, had a private entrance, and permitted the creation of an appropriate setting for informal testimony. All of the individuals who participated in the informal testimony process commented favourably on the place chosen for conducting informal testimony. It created a pleasant environment of comfort and emphasized that the process of informal testimony was not a legal process. This environment contributed significantly to fulfilling the goals set for informal testimony.

I am going to talk briefly about that environment. This is because in expert testimony in Phase 1 and in consultations about informal testimony, the issue of the physical environment for receiving disclosure from adult survivors or for interviewing children or young people regarding abuse has been raised. People talk about wanting a “soft place” or not wanting a “cold” or “hard” place for disclosure or interviews. Understanding what that “soft place” would be like could help those trying to create such an environment in the future. The informal testimony space was set up like a living room, with chairs and couches and a coffee table. Those testifying could decide where to sit and where others would sit. There was a desk, because some people preferred the separation or distance created by a desk—it contributed to a feeling of safety for some participants. There was natural light from windows, but curtains could be pulled to ensure privacy. There were lamps such as would be found at a home, not an office. There was a place outside to get some fresh air, which was needed to ensure comfort for those testifying. There was an individual washroom, as in a home. There were hot and cold beverages available and small snacks, again creating a welcoming atmosphere. There was also a separate room for people who needed privacy or a moment to compose themselves. There was a warm fleece blanket in case someone felt cold. There was a closet for coats and a place for boots so that those speaking would feel physically comfortable. The details of an environment matter because it is often the small things that can affect the overall impression of whether a difficult conversation was made more difficult or less difficult. We share our experiences in setting up a “soft” environment so that others may consider our approaches in designing their own welcoming place for receiving disclosure or conducting interviews with vulnerable individuals.

Having found the appropriate kind of place to conduct informal testimony, communication was the next focus. This Inquiry sought to promote awareness of the option for informal testimony:

- Advertisements were placed in local Cornwall papers and in weekly papers in the surrounding counties, both in English and in French.
- Inquiry staff wrote to all counsellors approved under the Counselling Support program whose clients might wish to attend; there were also orientation sessions for counsellors.
- A letter was sent to those on the Phase 2 mailing list—individuals who had asked to be kept up to date.
- A letter was sent to all party counsel for Phase 1 and Phase 2.
- Media briefings regarding the informal testimony process resulted in newspaper articles.
- Radio ads were broadcast over a one-month period; the ads featured Advisory Panel members Mike Church and Peter Jaffe warmly welcoming those who were interested to consider informal testimony and giving the contact information.
- Information was set out on the Inquiry's website; this information is provided at the end of this volume.

Over time, as those who participated in informal testimony commented favourably and encouraged others to come forward, word of mouth also became a communications tool.

While communications were helpful in making those who might come to informal testimony aware of the opportunity to do so, some individuals indicated they would not attend because they wanted only the Commissioner of this Inquiry to hear informal testimony. As that was not possible, they chose not to participate.

The registration system allowed those interested to contact Inquiry Phase 2 staff. Because this made it possible to discuss what was involved before registering, a person did not have to commit right away to giving informal testimony.

People who decided to register were given a two-hour appointment at a time of their choice. Appointments were spaced to avoid any overlap. This was to ensure that no one leaving after giving informal testimony encountered someone coming in for the next testimony. Evening and Saturday appointments were available as well as day appointments. Those testifying could bring their counsellor, and this was paid for through Counselling Support provided the counsellor attended an orientation session for informal testimony. Individuals could also request services of Witness Support. These services are described in greater detail in my Phase 2 Report. In addition, individuals could request simultaneous interpretation from English to French or from French to English.

Individuals who wished to give informal testimony could select Advisory Panel members and could indicate—no questions asked—if they did not want a

particular panel member. In general, two of the following members of the Advisory Panel received the informal testimony of each person:

- Mike Church
- Jan Handy
- Ben Hoffman
- Peter Jaffe
- Gail Kaneb
- Phil Murray
- Colleen Parrish

Interestingly, the most common combination requested in registration was for a man and a woman.

Prior to receiving any informal testimony, the Advisory Panel participated in an orientation to the facility and process and were trained on receiving informal testimony.

The Advisory Panel members have reported to me that they found receiving informal testimony both moving and meaningful. They were grateful for the opportunity and honoured by the confidence of those giving testimony.

Once informal testimony was completed, the process of preparing summaries began. At each informal testimony, a transcript was prepared from notes and from a device that recorded during testimony. Using the transcript or notes, Phase 2 staff prepared a summary in draft form. The summary was then sent to the person who had testified, stressing that they had the right to change or modify the contents of their summary, particularly if they were concerned the summary might identify them. Staff made changes after reviewing letters or discussing the summaries by phone or in person. The final summary was then prepared by Commission staff and sent to the individual. After that only small editing changes were made by this Report's editors. The transcript, notes, and earlier drafts were then destroyed. The individuals who gave informal testimony were given information about what was happening to the records. Each individual was also told that I would consider their recommendations for Phase 2 and would ultimately read their summary, and that in this way they could influence my Phase 2 Report. However, those giving informal testimony were also told that their summary and recommendations could not impact any findings of fact or conclusions in Phase 1 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry.

The voices of those giving informal testimony came through clearly in their summaries. I ask you to listen to these voices as you read the summaries of informal testimony given in Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry.

## Who Gave Informal Testimony

Thirty-one individuals registered for informal testimony. Three did not continue through the process for various reasons, so in the end twenty-eight individuals gave informal testimony. Seventeen were men and eleven were women. Most of these individuals brought with them support persons—usually spouses, family members, and friends. Eight were accompanied by their counsellor and seven requested Witness Support services. Only one individual brought a lawyer, an option available for informal testimony. In total, 108 individuals attended informal testimony either to give testimony or to provide support to those giving informal testimony.

Two of the individuals testifying came forward to discuss how they were affected by incidents or allegations of sexual abuse that arose within the context of their work situation and how it extended to their personal life. Three individuals giving informal testimony were family members of survivors, and the remaining twenty-three were survivors of sexual abuse that had occurred in their childhood or youth.

Most individuals who gave informal testimony did not testify in Phase 1 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry. Only six individuals who testified during Phase 1 gave informal testimony as well. This is important to know because it is possible that one could incorrectly guess at the identity of a person. I caution those reading these summaries of informal testimony to bear this in mind. While certain accounts may seem familiar, they are not necessarily the account or from the individual that a reader may think they are, based on Phase 1 testimony or media accounts.

Almost all of the individuals who gave informal testimony found the opportunity useful, commenting about feeling treated with respect, being received kindly, and feeling that a burden was lessened or that they “had their say.” Some, however, expressed disappointment with the informal testimony process or indicated that Phase 2 had not met their expectations. Some also commented about certain outcomes in Phase 1 that gave them concern, such as the consequences of a decision made by the Court of Appeal or the approach taken by counsel for certain parties. Those giving informal testimony were able to voice criticisms or express disappointment—this was part of a process oriented to those giving testimony, rather than any institution or organization, including this Inquiry itself. During closing submissions for Phase 2, counsel for the Victims’ Group made the point that his clients had expressed satisfaction with the informal testimony process. In particular, he noted how important it was to be received with compassion by the Advisory Panel members.

Following the informal testimony session, all individuals were given a draft of the summary of their informal testimony by Inquiry staff and most commented

on their summary. Those testifying had the option of testifying without a written summary being prepared, but only one individual chose not to have a written summary. Most people indicated that they were pleased with their summary. However, a few were disappointed that the summaries were anonymous or felt that the summaries could have been more detailed regarding their life experiences and could have made more specific references to those they identified as having wronged them. Efforts were made to accommodate each individual in respect to his or her summary, but one of the fundamental rules in the informal testimony process was to avoid identification. Some details would identify individuals and so could not be included in the summaries.

Those who brought supporters very much valued those supporters' attendance and often used the informal testimony session to thank those who came in support and to recognize the contributions these individuals had made to their lives. Many of those giving testimony also provided artwork, poetry, and song lyrics. These provided insight into the experiences of those who gave informal testimony and into the impacts of those experiences. These expressions also demonstrate the powerful role that art can play in building resilience in the face of traumatic life experiences and in communicating or symbolizing powerful emotions and poignant moments.

## The Voices of Informal Testimony

### **Lyrics: Must I Be ... or Am I?**

Must I ramble on?

Must I go away?

Must I carry on?

Hope for another day?

Must I live alone?

When I begin to fall?

Must I stay at home?

Or be alone at all?

Must I erase my fears?

Awake with every morn?

Must I speak with seers?

Must I be re-born again? Again?

Must I pray for peace?

Must I pray for love?

Must I seek relief?

From what I'm thinking of?

Must I cease to ask?

Must I do my tasks?

Must I go beyond?

Till I no longer last?

Must I live with pain?

Must I not complain?

Must I be so poor?

And always want for more ... of the same? Of the same? Of the same?

Must I sit and wait?

Must I investigate?  
Must I perplex my mind and not hesitate?  
Must I really need?  
Must I receive?  
Must I conform to what they conceive?  
Must I honor life?  
Must I try to learn?  
Must I carry on, to no longer be concerned, and remain?  
And remain? And remain? And remain?

*The author of these lyrics is a survivor of sexual abuse and these lyrics reflect his thoughts and concerns.*

## “Today I Think I Have a Future”

The man was welcomed to informal testimony, recalling a life journey of many difficulties, but also courageous steps to change his life. The man giving testimony reported that he grew up in an alcoholic and abusive home. His mother was a drug addict, and his parents continually split up and got back together. The home environment consisted of neglect as well as physical and emotional abuse. When he was five or six years old, he reported, he was put “into care” along with his younger sister. Since that time he has had abandonment and trust issues.

When he was in care, he indicated, he moved frequently between homes. While he had previously enjoyed a good relationship with his sister, after being in care, that relationship deteriorated and he started taking out his anger on her. To this day, he reports, this relationship is strained. In addition, he began stealing while in care.

At the age of nine, he was put back into his mother’s care.

Before the age of eleven, he had always been a good student, with straight-A grades. He began, however, to hang around with older neighbours and started smoking and drinking. He also had a difficult relationship with his stepfather and began running away from home for several days at a time. He would go to his best friend’s house and stay there until he was collected by his mother and stepfather.

At about the age of eleven, the man reported, his best friend and another acquaintance introduced him to an older man who allowed the boys to drink and do drugs at his house. The first time he went to this older man’s house, the man testifying was drunk and high, and he recalled that the older man allowed him to stay in the attic of his house. He decided to stay but was subsequently kept in the house against his will for approximately two weeks. The attic locked from the outside, and he could not escape. He stated that while he was locked in the house, pornography was constantly playing on television and the older man would sexually abuse him.

During the time the man testifying was held captive, he was not allowed out, except in the company of the older man. He was scared to make any noise, as there was another man living in the house. He was afraid that the other man would call the police or that something bad would happen if he made any noise. He stated, “So I always curled up in a ball on the bed and that’s where I stayed.” Once he heard his friends downstairs arguing with the older man, saying that they believed the man who gave testimony was there, being held against his will, but the older man denied it. While he was held captive, he was sexually abused every day. He recalled, “While I was there it was just hell.”

Eventually, his friends were able to help him escape from the older man's house. They snuck in through the back porch and opened the locked attic.

After the man's ordeal as a preteen, his life began to deteriorate. His previously stellar grades went down, and he ran away from home a lot more often. He also started drinking and doing drugs regularly. He was assessed for mental illness, but nothing wrong was found. Throughout this time, he recalled, he saw doctors and counsellors but no one ever asked him if he had been abused.

He then went to live with his biological father, a drug addict, who physically abused him. By the time he turned twelve he was back in care, as neither of his parents could handle his behaviour or care for him properly. He stated that he ran away from his care placement as well, as he did not like authority. Later he spent some time in a secure custody facility for young offenders. He stopped going to school, was "kicked out" of grade 8, and spent his time doing drugs. He reported that there was no help for him and that no one ever asked him what the problem was.

At the age of fourteen or fifteen, he was sexually abused by a woman. Others told him that he "got lucky." He does not feel that way—abuse by an adult of a young person is still abuse.

He later spent several years in custody for a series of crimes. While he was in custody, he stated, no one ever asked whether he had been abused. He stated that he was treated for various things, including anger management and coping skills, but that it was "all these other things but never got to the root, the core issues."

After he was released from custody, he returned to his hard life of daily drug use and crime, ending up in custody again. After his release, he moved to a new city and returned to his old ways once more, and returned to custody several times. Of his time in custody he stated, "Jail was always fun. That's another thing; jail was always fun, you know—three meals are better, fucking roof over my head."

Upon moving back to Cornwall, he saw the man who had sexually abused him and then began to seek help and to open up to his family about the abuse. He felt good about disclosing his abuse, although he continued to be frustrated at the lack of response to the abuse he had suffered.

The man testifying said that he did not regret his actions as a young person at the time, explaining that he needed to do what he did in order to survive. Now, however, he states that he feels remorse for his actions, especially toward his stepfather, whom he felt was trying to help him.

When asked about his feelings, the man replied that when he was high or drunk he constantly felt anger and hate. He is now taking medication to control his anger, anxiety, and stress.

In looking back on his experiences, the man indicated that it is essential to train teachers, guidance counsellors, and anybody else who has to deal with children to learn to spot the signs of abuse so that interventions can happen sooner. In his own case, he recalled, his own decline was very sudden, and he thinks that those around him should have noticed his problems, such as the dropping grades and social dissociation, and helped.

He speaks lovingly of his own children, who he states have given him the will to continue and to fight against abuse: “That’s why I’m sitting here—that’s why I’m sober. This is for my children because I don’t want them to go through the shit that I went through—not at all.”

The man giving informal testimony reported with understandable pride that he had now been sober and drug-free for fifteen months and had a regular counsellor who has helped him to start getting in touch with his emotions. He was also looking forward to starting a career-training program so that he can help others who have been abused. He stated, “Today I think I have a future.”

## “Listen to the Kids”

A woman came from a considerable distance, with her youngest son, to give her informal testimony.

The woman recounted a life in which she could not recall her mother and has never spoken to her, although her mother is still alive, and only met her father when she was a teenager. She had a vision of the “fairy-tale dad,” but the reality was a man who was an alcoholic and who physically and sexually abused her. He was also violent with his wife, even into old age, and he ultimately committed suicide.

The woman who testified had grown up with one sister until the sisters reached mid-teens and were separated, but the sisters never had a secure home, going from place to place. She reported being in over thirty different places, including a place for handicapped children, even though she was not handicapped. She was separated from other family members and her twin died at birth. Most of the homes where she was “in care” were not loving, and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse occurred. She recalled being referred to as a “reject” and being with other children who were crying and distressed. Sometimes there were other children who came and went quickly, making her fearful: “What happened to them? Were they dead?” This made her fear adults involved. This long experience of instability and rejection resulted in her “never feeling wanted, never feeling love.” She found she could not trust men as a result.

Her recollection of abuse started at a young age. She recalled that often there were women (wives/mothers) who were aware that their husband abused girls and they would even say “we were asking for it.” There was also repeated verbal abuse—as a little girl she was told she was ugly, that her mother should have had an abortion. Objectively, pictures she brought show that she was very cute as a child, something that almost surprises her as an adult. But numerous illnesses took their toll—chicken pox, measles, ringworm, rubella, and frequent vomiting. She was not nursed but treated with anger for being ill, even isolated outside. Only her sister tried to comfort her, and was beaten for it.

She also recalls sexual abuse by a man in the position of a father, abuse in which both she and her sister would resist and be confined, and she recalls her sister’s injuries. She also recalls beatings of herself or her sister for minor matters, and being made to do constant housework.

In only one circumstance was she in a situation where she was treated kindly without abuse, and other children were as well. She recalled pleasant experiences such as learning to cook a turkey, decorating the house, and going to church services. Sadly, the man who made the happy home died suddenly. All the children were frightened about what would happen next. Although it was not the fault of

the woman giving testimony, she worried that she could have contributed to the death of the kind man. The funeral was a terrible experience due to her being pushed to touch the deceased, and this caused her to break down, crying very hard and being very frightened. She ran away but was found by the police after two days and then disciplined physically by others for running away and losing control at the funeral. As an adult, she now realizes that the kind man who had died would never want her to feel guilty about his death: ‘‘He would be going nuts thinking that I thought I had killed him.’’ With the experience of seeing her husband and others die, she knows ‘‘death does happen.’’ One of her regrets is that a keepsake from this time was taken from her—a gift that symbolized a brief happy time.

She reported that she and other children who had been with the kind man and his wife in a family-like environment were subsequently in a new group placement situation.

As a teenager, she found that one of the most hurtful experiences was being mocked about her body and her weight by adults who had authority over her. This also happened to other girls in her presence. Both she and her sister responded with different eating disorders—being ‘‘fat or skinny’’ might protect you from sexual attacks.

A group of kids ran away together from the placement they were in and took whatever they could to survive and get food. They started to talk about their experiences, to report to authorities. But even then she was called a ‘‘shit disturber’’ even though the complaints were found to be justified. She also feared being charged for breaking and entering in the escape effort, but in the end this did not happen.

She knows little today of the children she knew from her difficult childhood. What she knows is sad—suicides, manslaughter: ‘‘They didn’t make it.’’ Most of those who had charge of her have died or left the area. But one young man came and bravely apologized for his father’s conduct. It was something that had clearly weighed on his mind for many years, since the two had been children together.

As a result of current-day counselling, the woman is beginning to realize that to have gotten as far as she has, she must have had a core of strength that the others did not. The woman explained that she was now the mother of adult children. Some were the children of her husband of many years, who is now deceased. While she had been married for decades, there were serious issues in the marriage. Her husband would sometimes force her to have sex. He was also unfaithful, sometimes with people she knew. He had a child by another woman, and the need to make child payments reduced the testifying woman’s available resources when her husband died, contributing to current financial hardships.

One of her children, born before her marriage, was a result of incest and assault, and that relationship was troublesome from the beginning. She was criticized for not seeking an abortion, and there were efforts to take the baby away, partly due to her young age and the circumstances of her pregnancy. Her child would be violent with her, verbally taunting her and acting out in extreme ways, even suggested she enjoyed the rape that led to conception of the child. There were interventions, but none successful.

However, as a parent the woman said, “I never laid a hand on my kids.” The experience of corporal punishment was so terrible for her that she could never inflict it herself. And now that she has grandchildren, she always tells her children not to use physical punishment and not to misconduct themselves sexually. She feels her son is of the new generation in male attitudes. As a teenager, for example, he would stand up to her husband, saying, “No means no.”

As an adult, the woman testifying has struggled with self-esteem. She was raped and told she was “damaged goods.” She was abused and told “she was a slut.” In fact, she had only one consensual sexual relationship, with her husband of many years.

Today she struggles financially and lives with a son who has serious health problems. She is not happy where she is but is not sure that moving elsewhere would help. She is proud of a newly arrived grandchild but is sad that she cannot see and hold the baby, something that would mean a great deal to her. She has a good counsellor but still cuts herself to “take the pain away,” although this has lessened since she started regular counselling. When her son sees this happen, he is distressed. As well, due to her negative experience, she distrusts any authority such as police or child welfare and struggles with day-to-day survival. She has lost weight due to having insufficient money for food and having to go to food banks. She feels unwelcome in the city where she currently lives.

In looking back at her experiences, she feels it is important when placing children to have better personality matching for foster or adoptive children and foster or adoptive parents. She feels that some people she has known who abused her should never have had access to children. As well, she feels there should be courses to educate potential foster or adoptive parents. Stability is also important, reducing placements and worker contacts. Because she had experiences of physical injuries—head injuries, broken arms—but hospitals accepted excuses such as car accidents or falls, rather than inquiring about potential abuse, she feels health authorities should be more watchful and also keep close records. Records of her childhood were largely missing, itself a loss when trying to reconstruct a life and understand “what happened.”

The woman was urged to care for herself and indicated she appreciated efforts made by Commission staff to assist with benefits applications and other practical assistance for herself and her son. She also expressed love and concern for her family and sisters. Her courage and resilience were recognized by all in attendance.

The woman testified in closing, “Listen to the kids. I think if they listened to us we wouldn’t be in this situation. I listen to my kids all the time and I think kids are important, and they are our future.”

## “She’s My Hero”

A man was welcomed to informal testimony, speaking of his experiences as the husband of a woman who had a long history of sexual abuse. His wife had experienced abuse by family members as a young child—from her father, with the knowledge of her mother and even with her assistance, and from all but a few of her uncles. She also reported abuse by priests and that her family exchanged nude pictures of her for money. The man’s wife grew up in Cornwall and at times in communities near Cornwall.

The man giving informal testimony reported that his wife’s abuse occurred over a long time and did not stop until she was twenty-one years old, married, the mother of two children.

The husband did not come from the Cornwall area. He was a skilled tradesman by training. He was the second husband of the woman who had experienced prolonged childhood sexual abuse. In addition, her first husband had been abusive.

The husband reported his observances of the impact on his wife and on their family and intimate life. The impacts were profound and wide-ranging. Since his wife had been sexually abused, there was impact on their sexual relations, with certain acts not being enjoyable or physically possible for his wife due to flashbacks. These problems were presented in the context of an otherwise supportive relationship.

Looking back to when he first knew his wife, the man recalled coming home from work and finding his wife hiding in a closet with her young teen sons. In the past, he recounted, his wife’s abusive father would tell her sons and first husband to “leave her alone” when she was distraught as a result of interaction with the father. The sons would often disobey to help their mother. Her current husband keeps sharp objects away and has supervised his wife and “talked her through” episodes where she might harm herself.

The impact of historical abuse has also been visible in the distress of their daughter, who has found her mother hiding in a closet or has seen burn marks and cuts from self-harm. Their daughter had also been used to seeing her mother’s extreme distress and disassociation when her mother is reliving abuse from the past.

The husband also described the pressure from his in-laws to avoid reporting of historical abuse by family members and others who abused his wife. He reported that his family has moved repeatedly to get away from threats from his wife’s family and from their attempts to control his wife. Interaction with the family of his wife, he observed, seemed always to result in family members trying to get her to commit suicide. In addition, he indicated, his wife’s family had made false allegations about him and threatened to harm him. As well, the

husband experienced a severe injury as a result of an assault by his wife that was in response to the demands of her father. The injury cost him employment in his skilled trade. He had been making good money—one week he made \$3,500. The loss of over six years: “Do the math; I do and I cry!” The stressors of his family life have caused him to have depression, and he is currently under psychiatric care. The family has experienced financial hardship, and they worry about getting through the coming winter.

The husband recalled that his wife’s family had a pattern of trying to control his wife’s life, pushing themselves into her life at every opportunity. This means he has to be vigilant and deal with a series of threats and reports and actions to hurt him as the key support to his wife. He describes himself as a person who does not like to control people. He believes that this is why his wife has made good progress lately. He said, “I constantly tell her: her opinion matters; she is smart; it doesn’t matter what your family told you, you can do whatever you want, with work.” His perception is that “they are losing because she is not afraid any more.” He observes, “She may be nervous about certain things, but who isn’t?” However, he reports this is a struggle, because at first not only was he reassuring his wife about herself, but every time her family re-established mental control, they would use this to hurt his wife and himself. Examples including persuading his wife to sell their possessions, destroy cellphones, pawn her engagement ring, and cut off utilities. Then he would encounter allegations that he was failing to care for his family properly. This was in the context of a custody dispute involving his wife’s first husband, who had been abusive.

The man gave an example from the past that represented the “roller coaster” of his relationship with his wife. While he and his wife were living in a community far from Cornwall, his wife’s family convinced her that the husband had been unfaithful and also that he was abusive to children and was lying about it. The husband said that these allegations were all false, but the incidents of which he was accused were similar to incidents involving his wife’s father. The plan of the family was for the wife to move to low-income housing in Cornwall. To accomplish this, the family advised her to claim that she was abused by her husband, so that she would move up on the priority list for housing. When her husband asked her about this, his wife acknowledged it. At a later time, his wife was convinced by her family to lay charges against him, charges which were later found to be unfounded and were dismissed. At any rate, during this period of separation, the husband sent money to the wife for her living expenses but her family kept the money, giving his wife barely enough to survive. These kinds of situations continued until 2005. He described this period of time coping with his wife’s family as “life in the Twilight Zone.”

The man described a “turning point” for his wife in 2005 when she recognized threats of physical harm from a family member as part of a pattern of countless threats, calls, and manipulation. However, he feels that no one stepped in to help stop his wife’s family behaviour and call them to account, even though her father had been convicted of sexual abuse.

The husband said it was hard to come forward but that the informal testimony was the first time that anyone had shown him that they wanted to understand what he went through as the partner of someone who had experienced childhood sexual abuse. As he summarized what his wife went through, he really does not know how she survived “such a life.” He (along with his daughter) wants justice for his wife. He concluded by saying that it is important to talk about abuse in the hope that no other child will go through what his wife endured. “She is a great person” because she has spoken up. “She is my hero!”

## **“I Had Gotten Lost”**

The man giving testimony came with his spouse and a supporter. He stressed that his testimony reflected his views and was not that of his counsellor, spouse, or lawyer.

He recalls that his family were poor and had few resources. As a result, the children were placed “in care.” As the youngest, he looks back on this as a traumatizing time, recalling trying to jump out of the car when being taken away. He was too young to know what was going on and was separated from some of his siblings—“they scattered.” He was often in short-term situations, changing schools as well as homes.

In an early placement, he recalled, he and his brother had to work “like men” even though they were young. If they were slow or late returning from somewhere, there was physical punishment, particularly for his older siblings, who tried to protect him as the youngest. The kids felt isolated and did not do well at school and were “petrified” to say anything. They were often placed in situations unsuitable for their age in terms of work or exposure to harm. At school, he felt the stigma of not living with his own parents and felt that the schools sanctioned him more severely than other children because of this. Other children, for example, might swear and get a detention; he would be suspended.

While there were some kind people he encountered, only one place he lived felt like a home: “It was the best part of my childhood.” He enjoyed the support of a man who was like a true father figure, working together on chores and enjoying an “argument free” environment. As a result, his marks at school went up. In particular, his strong potential in art began to be revealed. He was also a top speller and quick at math. Things were promising, but sadly it did not last. Illness in the family he was with resulted in his moving to another placement as a young teen: “That’s where things started to fall apart.” In addition to the family’s own younger children, in the new situation there was an older, much bigger teen living there, who was not a family member. The man giving testimony was sexually abused but was initially too ashamed to tell the family: “I mean, this was a dark secret.”

He responded with anger to being abused, resulting in suspension for fighting at school. His emotions were in turmoil; he lashed out; he would go outside to cry. He blamed his mother for not keeping the family together, for not protecting him. Indeed, for the first few years apart, he had hoped his mother would “take him back,” but drinking and poor choices in boyfriends kept her from meeting parental expectations. He felt he had to stand up for himself—there was no one else. He had confronted his abuser, which resulted in an unequal fight in which he was injured, but at least he was separated from his abuser as a result.

At the end of this difficult time, he recalls, those who had charge of him said hurtful things about his being “a bum” and not having any future due to his school problems. He responded by telling of the abuse he was experiencing in their home: “I tried to say what was happening. I didn’t go in detail.” He was greeted with anger, a slap, and being told to go outside in a bitterly cold snowstorm: “I was shot down. I wanted to die.”

He fled into the winter storm, ending up at his mother’s. He recalls that during that evening he told his mother, stepfather, and the man heading the household where he was staying about the abuse suffered. The next day he stated that he again disclosed what was happening, this time to a person in authority. What followed was a period of numerous placements—and over forty years later, he feels he has never had an explanation or an apology. At the time, he had no professional help. “It was a very hard time in my life.” And this led to a difficult ongoing life journey, starting with these experiences.

After the incident in which he fled to his mother’s, he reported he had several unsuccessful short-term placements in which he did not receive help and was categorized as a “truant.” The man testifying indicated that there were still people who were kind and compassionate and tried to intervene for him, in particular “a wonderful lady.” Despite this, he ended up in training school for being “unmanageable.” He indicates that he would have much preferred to stay with the “wonderful lady” for the short time remaining until he was sixteen. To get him to go, a person he had not previously met said it was “beautiful—they’ve got sports.” But by the time he got there he had cried himself sick: “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back and I knew I was going there for no reason ... There was no professional help. There was nobody. There was nobody.” He was separated from the only people who cared for him. He reports feeling bitter and full of hate.

At training school, his emotional and physical breakdown resulted in the immediate administration of sedatives, given by needles, and confinement in the dark infirmary. He stated that he was sexually abused there, dependent and unable to defend himself due to age and sedation. He indicated that his abusers were adult men. When he got out to work in the external carpentry shop, he enjoyed it—people there “treated me good.” But he observed that so many of the boys there were francophones—much larger numbers than they represented in the overall population. This continues to concern him.

At age sixteen, without notice and after only a few months at training school, he was released, without support or arrangements. He said that when he came out:

I couldn’t handle authority ... I ended up in a world of alcohol and all I did was just make it bad for myself ... That’s all my brother and I ever

did was drink and fight ... didn't care about nobody. How could I? I couldn't care about myself.

Several years later he got a regular job, got married, and had children. But his wife put up with "a weekend drunk." At work, he was constantly confronting authority and "lost my job and everything else." Limited education made getting work hard. He recalls, "I had gotten lost." While he loved his children, he did not know how to father. When his wife left with the children, he was suicidal, "popping pills and drinking heavily," often ending up in emergency or held in a psychiatric ward. No intervention helped. It was partly that the kind of people he "hung out with" were fighters and drinkers: "So I thought it was kind of normal ... I couldn't understand people that didn't drink." He also explained, "I became an alcoholic to kill the pain ... I was trying to keep everything hidden."

When he was struggling to fight alcoholism, he got the courage to tell police about his abuse at the training school. He was trying to save himself. The response was disappointing: his abusers were all dead. "Here I'm trying to cry for help, and I'm trying to get justice done and the doors are shut on me." But he was proud to say he stayed sober then—"I don't know how, but I stayed sober."

He recalls the miracle that came to his life at that difficult time:

I was on my knees one morning and I just asked God to take this desire to drink from me ... That morning of my last drink, the desire to drink was lifted. It never came back. It's been over eight years and that's a miracle.

He is a strong believer in AA, but even in this environment he finds it hard to talk about his childhood experiences. Once he did, and found other men coming to him with similar stories.

Speaking as an adult, he recalls, with sadness, the life he and his brothers and sister had as children, and their lives as adult survivors. They are all in their sixties now, many with serious health problems. He loves his brother who is near death: "He never got justice. I never got justice." His brother has been a model of sobriety—for over thirty years. They remain close, and his brother's example is inspirational.

When looking back, the man testifying and his wife wondered whether it might have been better if his birth family had been given more help. While there was poverty, there was no physical or sexual abuse at home; the alternatives were worse. His parents could have benefited from alcohol counselling as well as financial support.

In addition, he feels foster homes should be more carefully evaluated in that it should be clear that references are independent and not family members. Where investigations are done, they should be fairly done. There should be “surprise visits” at homes where kids are in care, and interviews should be done separately from those in authority: “Children should be believed when they disclose abuse, and reports of physical and emotional abuse should be taken as seriously as reports of sexual abuse.” As well, there should be education about the signs of abuse, such as anger in young men.

Another issue he wants to raise is the education disadvantage many men have due to a chaotic childhood and lack of opportunities. For example, if he had a high school graduation equivalency, he would get a better job. And any training costs money, and there is no way to get it for those on disability pensions. He suggests there should be some sort of opportunity fund so people can get training or a better education.

The man testifying has been disappointed by the Cornwall Public Inquiry. He feels that there was been too much “hairsplitting” over legal matters and not enough accountability, and that institutions are too powerful: “I don’t think that’s right.” He feels that he did not get to bring forward important details of his experiences. Since he has had a negative experience with the Inquiry, “I haven’t been myself. I felt like I was going to have my day and somebody was going to listen.” When this did not happen, he was devastated. He felt betrayed. He also indicated he was “teed off” by some of the media coverage.

Recently, he has felt he was a different person—lost and suffering. He runs away as he did as a little boy. He was reminded that he had in the past taken steps to change his life, to stop drinking, to go to therapy, to care for himself and others. And his strength as a man can save that boy again. Both he and his wife deserve happiness—to build the best future they can.

The man testifying said, “All my life I used to meet bad people along the way. I mean, it took a long time for me to believe that there are good people in this world. I believe that today.” He went on, “The counselling was the best thing that ever happened. When it comes to the areas of my childhood and what happened, they’re helping me so much.” He also is pleased he helped some of his sisters get counselling.

But he would still say: “There are institutions that I would like to stand up and say, ‘We’re taking accountability over this, individuals to be accountable for what happened,’ or just say, ‘We made mistakes.’” He feels there has been too much pointing at others, and not people facing up to personal or organizational accountability. For example, only recently has there been correction of his records, recognizing that he never consented to the sexual abuse—it was not consensual—and that there is corroboration for the information he has given in this area.

In summation, the man testifying looks forward and is still seeking happiness. He thanks God for the woman in his life, though he “dumps things” on her: “She’s so understanding.” One of the reasons he had sought counselling was to be a better companion to this woman. His brother’s example and wisdom gives him peace. He hopes other children get help earlier than he did, and avoid his journey: “Let’s hope it becomes a better world.”

Those listening recognized the courage it took to come forward, to work for the next generation, to force organizations to respond better, to ensure there are checks and balances. All recognized the talents, intelligence, and perseverance involved and were honoured to hear this man’s informal testimony.

## “Don’t Let the Sun Catch You Crying”

A woman, now in her forties, recounted her life experiences and the serious consequences of childhood sexual abuse on her whole life. She attended the informal testimony with her husband and therapist. Some recollections caused the woman to disassociate or to return to being a child at the time of various incidents of abuse. Her therapist was able to bring her back to the present with reassurance and grounding to the current reality. All praised her for her courage in coming forward.

In terms of her background, the woman testifying came from a family with two parents and three siblings. She was born and raised in Cornwall. She attended a separate school and a Roman Catholic Church. Three years after she married, she moved out of Cornwall, in fear of her father and other perpetrators. She then lived elsewhere in Ontario.

The woman giving informal testimony explained that she had been sexually abused by her father from the age of four, then raped from the age of six until she was fifteen. There were further acts of molestation from age fifteen to when she left Cornwall with her husband. In addition to her father, she reported, a grandfather molested her and would “French kiss” her and her sisters. These incidents would occur at Christmas or other family get-togethers. When she complained or resisted, her father would insist it was a “mark of respect” to comply. As well, she commented that only one of the uncles in her extended family refrained from molestation of children in the family: he was “the only one who was a good man.”

She felt as if everyone knew about the abuse but did not do anything to protect her because her father was, she believed, well connected to the church and to members of the police force, through sports activities. She recounted memories of abuse within a religious group in which there were several other children as well, and recalled feeling responsible to ensure that it was she who was the one abused rather than the others, in order to protect those children, one of who was her cousin. She recalled that the priests’ teachings were “You are to punish yourself for the sins that you have committed, and say your ‘Hail Mary’s’ and ‘Glory Be’s.’” She also recalled being made to feel guilty about the abuse, as if it were her fault. She would feel she was “bad” and had to punish herself by cutting herself or starving herself.

Abuse occurred not only at home—for example, in the basement—but also at family campgrounds where there were other relatives. In these situations, she recalled, she saw the abuse of other children by her relatives when she was quite a young child.

Certain memories are not completely clear. For example, she recalled being briefly brought to a foster home, at about age nine. Her feelings of sadness came

back to her during the informal testimony. She also recalled the other little children who were also unhappy, but she is not clear about why she was brought there. She has a memory of her father, when she was about five, killing a baby with a pick, and she believes she knows where the baby was buried. She reported having contact with a woman who recalled that woman's husband being there.

In addition, she has recollections, from age twelve or so, of teaching catechism, and is frightened in recalling this. She has memories of priests doing "horrific things" to her in what she calls "a room with a big red chair in it." There was one who was the leader, whom she referred to as a "higher power."

At one stage in her childhood she thought she might be a nun, but she recalled in the informal testimony a retreat she went on where a nun told her that she should not become one. She used to read the Bible every night when she was young. She does believe in God, but said, "My God is love ... My God does not hurt people." She recalled children crying but not being able to protect them: "I care about the innocent children." She recalled these children being abused in the basement of a church.

As a young teenager living back at home, she recounted, there was a time when her father expressed concern that she was not having her period—"he was scared." She recalled being taken to the doctor during the winter and reported that she had an abortion. She recalled the pain in her pelvis and the bleeding. She recalls being told by her mother, "I hemorrhaged before—just go take a bath and put your feet up." She recalled her mother telling her after the abortion, "You are better off. That baby would have turned out retarded."

The impact of childhood abuse on the woman's whole life has been profound. In addition to the suffering and sadness in her childhood, she had great difficulty as a young adult. These difficulties included being married to a man who followed the sexually abusive pattern of her father. She recalled her father telling her first husband, "Just leave her alone in the room when she cries—she'll be fine." She recalled her husband forcing intimacy as she was curled up in a corner crying: "He'd flip me over, do his thing, then leave." She recalled many times after the forced intimacy when she felt like cutting herself again or taking a "bunch of pills."

Her response to childhood abuse was cutting herself repeatedly, scratching herself, and overdosing on pills. She continued for many years to feel a need to be "obedient"—for example, by destroying diaries or records of abuse at her father's command, or never raising her voice when at home or in the presence of her parents. She reported being respectful of her parents at home.

In her late twenties, away from home and elsewhere in Ontario, the young woman made a decision to go for more counselling and attended group meetings for sexually abused women. Within time, she felt it necessary to report the abuse

by her father. When her intention to report her father became known to her family, her mother and sisters made many threatening phone calls in an attempt to stop her from having her father charged. She recalled her mother on the phone telling her, “I told the kids to leave you alone, because they don’t know what you’ve been through, but if you go through with this, it’s either going to be you or me, do you know what I mean?” At this time, she did not know if this was a threat that she would be killed or her mother.

She continued to be frightened of her father, seeing him as “in control” at all times. If he came to her house, she would hide in the basement with her children. At times she would go down to the basement and play the song “Don’t Let the Sun Catch You Crying,” and she would pound her fist on the cement wall. Her father later boasted of having “connections” with the police after his charges. She feared him because of what he said about the connections he had with the police and priests of Cornwall.

In reporting her abuse as a child and young person, she felt unsupported, because she experienced resistance by her mother, her sisters, and her husband at that time. At that time, they listened to her father’s advice about “how to handle her.” Consequently, she felt she was all alone in reporting and in her efforts to be heard. She felt that her report was not given priority and was very disappointed that investigations and charges took so long. She felt that the investigating officer treated her like the perpetrator and that he tried to convince her not to press charges, that she would most likely not be believed, and that most victims are cross-examined harshly. She recalled asking the police officer to let her know when her father would be picked up, because the “emotional roller-coaster ride” and the threatening phone calls would stop once he was picked up. That did not happen for a long time. She recalled calling the police many times, and at one time the officer who took down her statement told her, “Stop calling us, you are becoming a pest.” This made her very upset. She recalled that when her father was finally arrested, the police phoned her and told her, “We called your father into the station and he came in on his own peacefully.” This continues to be a major disappointment for her. She had hoped that her father would have been handcuffed when charged.

She was told in court of the conditions imposed on her father: that he wasn’t to be with any child under the age of sixteen, that he was to have several years of probation, that he wasn’t allowed to drink alcohol, and that he was required to participate in a group that deals with sexual abuse perpetrators. He was also given a short jail term. She recalled that she heard from his probation office about one year later that “he doesn’t need no probation officer.” She recalls that this was said in a laughing way. She also recalled that her father spent less than three weeks in jail because he “took a heart attack.” He was then placed in a

halfway house, only on weekends, and she heard “that he never followed through with group.” She suspected that her father did not take the situation seriously and continued to be in situations where he had contact with children, including babysitting his grandson for over three years. She reported an incident of a neighbourhood boy coming over “to play in the basement and have pop”—a place of abuse for her. She reported this but was not satisfied with the result. She reported that she was told that, apparently, “his probation was over, there were no convictions against him.” As well, in this time period, she saw her father “French kiss” her sister, which suggested to her that he was not changing his ways.

In recent years, she experienced frustration and delay in getting newspaper records of her father’s conviction, but ultimately, after six years, she got them. She also questioned why it appeared that her childhood doctor of twenty-one years had no health records about her, though she was in and out of the doctor’s office and the hospital. It appears from the newspaper article she has that there was an agreed statement of facts submitted to the court by the defence counsel and Crown. She felt that the statement represented only a small fraction of the actual nature and scope of the sexual abuse.

In addition to other life hardships, she recounted, her mother called her up after not speaking to her for over five years and told her, “I have a feeling that you’re going to take a bunch of pills and die, and I’m worried about you.” She then ended up in the hospital from an overdose. While she was in the hospital, her sister phoned her and told her she had a friend who dealt with dissociative identity disorder, and “she can heal you in two days.” She recalled that her sister came down with a supposed licensed therapist, who convinced her that she “didn’t exist.” She also reported that this woman suggested that if she testified at the Inquiry, someone would harm her or her family. After her sister and her sister’s friend left, she indicated, she again took another overdose and almost lost her life that day. She recalled that she and her family left their home and went into hiding for two years. This also was reported and nothing was done about it.

When she became involved with her current husband, who has been supportive to her, her family was critical of him, suggesting he was not good for her, trying to harm him, and even telling her to harm her husband. She recalled her dad telling her to “get a gun and shoot him.” This was also reported to the police and nothing was done. From the “sexual abuse, manipulation and mind-control” that her father has had over her, and at the command of her father, she indicated in the informal testimony that one night she took her current husband’s arm and pulled it out of joint, causing him to have surgery and not be able to work as a skilled tradesman. To this day, she feels guilty for the injury she caused her husband, and also for the loss of his “bread and butter.” Ironically, she commented, her father had lost his business when he was charged.

She continues to feel threatened and fearful. To this day she has flashbacks and dissociations with fragmentary memories. She is sometimes angry at herself for “not protecting herself.” She also has concerns for the well-being of her three children, two of whom are young adults living away from home. The history of abuse has affected their lives tremendously, and there are communications problems in the family at the current time. Her younger child is very intuitive and knows that “when mom is not well, she is there to give hugs” and lets her know when she talks too much about the past, it’s time to take a break and “play or read.” As for her husband, she feels that he has made her feel like she is “a somebody,” that she is strong. He always tells her, “No matter what, it was never your fault.” Intimacy has been impossible for her for six years, and she indicates that her husband is very supportive about this. She recalls him saying, “I will not jeopardize your memories or flashbacks. I can wait until you are ready.”

In terms of life accomplishments, the woman has three children and is currently in a supportive, loving relationship. Her youngest lives at home with her and her husband. Her qualified therapist has been helpful, and she attends counselling regularly. A particularly important indication of her progress is that it has been two years since she has cut herself and three months since she has scratched herself.

She looks back at her childhood and cannot believe how much abuse she suffered and witnessed, surrounded by adults who did not protect her and other children. She views that period of time as if everyone was “the living dead” who could not rise up to confront a “secret” that was actually widely known.

For this woman, the experience of informal testimony was reported to be positive—for the fact that she could tell her story and the truth of what happened to the life of a little girl, “herself,” and let people know that there were hidden secrets of child abuse. It was “as if a burden were taken” from her shoulders.

## “I’m Proud of Who I Am”

A woman was welcomed to her informal testimony by those in attendance, including her sister, who had come from outside Ontario to support her.

The woman giving informal testimony indicated she was only three years old when she went into care in the company of her six-year-old sister. She was separated from other siblings and did not even know for several years that there were other children in her family.

Due to her young age, she has only a few recollections of that time, but they are not happy ones. For example, she remembers being punished physically and locked in a closet. Her older sister would try to get her out, in response to her cries of fear. She also recalls being slapped and that the man heading the family would “touch her where he wasn’t supposed to touch and I would always cry.” She reported in the informal testimony that she was told that if she said anything, her sister would be taken away. She complied, because “my sister was my life and I didn’t want her to go away.” Notwithstanding her silence, she and her sister were taken away to separate adoptive homes: “I cried so much because I knew I didn’t tell anyone and they took my sister away from me anyway.”

At age seven, she was placed in a home some distance from Cornwall. She recalled:

There were lots of nights a man would come and take me away. He would hurt me very bad and then he’d put me back and I was always full of blood and crying because I was hurting a lot. Then the adoptive mother would come in and clean me up … and all she would tell me is to be quiet and go to sleep.

After a while, she recalled, she was told she was not wanted, and she went to several other places. In one place, she was put in a dark room and denied food as a punishment. In another place, she was beaten regularly with a stick and had welts and bruises on her hands, feet, and calves. As well, she said, the woman and her daughter in one home tried to drown her in the toilet and hit her on the head with a broom handle. She remembers that she was not taken to the hospital or a doctor, even when she was bleeding from injuries. Another discipline was putting her outside nude in the winter. If she vomited, she was forced to eat the vomit. There was also severe physical abuse. She recalled that she tried to run away but was caught and beaten. She indicated in informal testimony that the son of the family would molest her, the son saying, “It was okay.” She said that her reports to child welfare authorities were not believed.

She recalls that when she was about nine, neighbours observed the beatings, which usually occurred in the basement. As an adult, she was told that the neighbours said, “If they don’t get her out of there, they would be taking her out in a body bag.” By this time, she was down to fifty-six pounds.

At age ten, she was adopted by another family. While she recalled in the informal testimony that the family cried at the signs of injury to her, the woman giving testimony reported being also beaten by the couple who were her adoptive parents and molested by her adoptive father: “I had no one to tell … I was afraid to tell because I didn’t want to get beaten up again, so I kept it to myself.” She reports having “given up.”

The woman giving testimony said that her survival strategy was to “live like this until I was eighteen years old, when I could be on my own—be my own boss.” She thinks this was why she married so young, at age eighteen, and stayed in relationships that were unstable and abusive physically, mentally, and sexually: “I never felt loved in my life. I was led to believe that I deserved this. I do not know what ‘feeling safe’ feels like.”

One of the few positive memories she has of her teen years is that her sister “found her,” having found pictures and letters that her little sister had sent to her in the past. The woman giving testimony visited her sister at her home and the sister’s family returned her to her own home. Her sister, who was in attendance, recalls that home: “It was dirty and flies everywhere and she didn’t have a decent bedroom and there were doors missing and I just thought, ‘Poor girl.’” Her sister subsequently met the woman’s boyfriend, who became her husband. The sister said at the informal testimony, “I did not like her husband. I thought she deserved better. I didn’t like the way he treated her.”

Indeed, the woman giving testimony reported that her husband had alcohol problems and was controlling and abusive and she had to fear for her safety. She was also in a subsequent relationship, which was so violent that jail time was ordered after her hospitalization. Her son was very relieved she left this situation. She reported still being “scared when I see” the man who hurt her and still fearing for her safety.

The most positive aspect of her adult life has been her sons. Sadly, one son and a beloved granddaughter, only three weeks old, died in a house fire about three years before the time of the informal testimony. She had been very close with her son. Although there was nothing she could have done, she “lives with that every day.” Her other son has had a baby and she really enjoys spending time with this cute toddler. She recalled that she was very loving with her sons, “breaking the cycle” of abuse, and always telling her sons that “I loved them, and hugging them and everything before they went to bed.” As an adult, her son

confides in her and she spends a great deal of time with her son, his girlfriend, and the grandson. She laughs that her son's girlfriend is like her.

Recently she has reconnected with the sister she spent time with as a child, and her son has met some cousins. Her sister said, "I don't think we've ever lost our love." Together they have found some of the places they lived as children and have reconstructed some of their family history.

The woman giving testimony also indicated that she was being helped by an excellent counsellor, and that this counselling helped her get off most of her anxiety medications. She still has to cope with significant physical health problems that affect day-to-day living, and she still lives with "symptoms of depression" every day. Often she "hides a lot behind a smile and no one knows." She feels this is because of a lack of self-esteem and confidence. She explained, "As a child, I was told that this was just the way life was, and this was confirmed to me as an adult."

She feels stronger, particularly in avoiding the wrong relationships. In that decision she is sustained by her girlfriends: "I had two of them, and they helped me through it." She has also become aware of her Aboriginal heritage, but it is a struggle because although people often identify her as Aboriginal, she was not raised in the culture and was not informed of her exact background. But, she said, "I'm proud of who I am."

In terms of recommendations for Phase 2, the woman giving testimony urged people to "listen to the kids when they say something that's happened to them. Don't think they're lying." She also thinks it is important to insist that the homes children go to are supervised, but that if the birth parents "do help themselves, to make sure the kid goes back home. Don't give up the kids to just put them in an adopted home right away." And, very importantly, she said, "The brothers and sisters should stay together," or great efforts should be made to allow siblings to be in touch. She says it would have made a difference if she and her sister "would have grown up together—we would have been a lot closer." She recalled sadly that another sister grew up nearby and attended the same school, but "we did not even know we were sisters." In summation, she expressed this hope: "I just hope they do the right thing—that the right thing comes from the Inquiry."

Those honoured to receive the informal testimony encouraged the woman to take time for herself—to get outside, take a healthy walk, see friends, and care for herself. She was commended for her sense of humour, her strength in coming forward, and her contributions as a mom, friend, sister, and grandmother.

## “What Should I Do Now?”

A woman came with her husband to talk about the significant impact that a situation of abuse can have for those in the workplace where the abuse occurred.

In terms of background, the couple were long-term Cornwall residents, enjoying friends and family in the community. They participated in many local activities and enjoyed an active social life. In addition, they had significant family responsibilities, often being the “go-to” people in their extended family when help or support was needed. They gave and continue to give freely of their time and energy, even when the responsibilities were heavy.

The woman giving her informal testimony had a part-time job doing professional work that was of benefit to the public and to individuals. She felt proud of her work and enjoyed her work colleagues.

In the mid-1980s, the woman began to notice some conduct by a male colleague that worried her. And, quietly, some others she worked with began to comment. She observed no specific incidents, but there were situations when a young man would come in and the male colleague would seem excited or when he would intervene to take a case involving a teenaged boy that was scheduled to be handled by others. He also spent a lot of time with another man, not from the same department but from the same organization, who was later charged with offences related to sexual matters. He seemed to create opportunities to be alone with young men, for example, inviting them to go into private rooms.

As a part-time worker, the woman saw less than her colleagues did. Full-time staff were uneasy and suspicious, but when they approached senior staffers, they were told “proof was needed.” Over time, the woman developed ways of intervening, anticipating that having another person in place could prevent any inappropriate behaviour—by entering the room where the male colleague was with a young man and offering help, for example. However, she felt she had to be respectful of the male colleague, whose job was much senior to hers. In addition, the male colleague was generally very friendly and kind to everyone. With young men, though, it seemed like more than just being friendly.

One day when she was off work, the police arrested her male colleague at work and charged him with a sexual offence involving a young man. The incident had happened at work and the father of the young teen had complained. Her work colleagues called her that day, and when she came into work she felt as if she hated to go in. She observed, “Everyone was really upset.” The woman felt that she was a whirl of emotions, in part because she was close in age to the accused, whereas her colleagues were much younger. Some were saying, “It’s not my fault, it’s his,” but they clearly were upset. The woman felt that everyone coming in that day to her workplace was “judging me and us from the rumours.” She felt self-conscious and anxious.

In the course of that difficult day, the woman ran into a senior administrator who asked how she felt, and the woman spoke honestly of the turmoil of emotions and how to “turn off the tears, the frustration, the black marks” and to do her job and serve those who were vulnerable and really needed her. She was also in tears at the thought of her colleague being in jail—behind bars.

When the administrator said, “We’ll come down and see you,” she felt relief. But when the senior staff came, not much assistance was given to her or others at work. It felt like “Just move on,” she recalled.

On returning home on this terrible day, the woman received a call from a friend who knew both her and the accused male colleague. The friend told her that the male colleague wanted her to act as a character witness and asked her if she thought the accused man was guilty. She found this quite upsetting, and just did not know what to say. Now the issue was coming to her home—not left at work.

At this time, there were many other events in her life demanding attention. Children were changing schools or going away to school, and there was an evening out planned to celebrate a major anniversary. On the night before the outing, when she was excited and happy, she received an unexpected call from her accused co-worker. He asked her to be a character witness, which she could not do. When she was asked, “Why not?” she recalled, “I was just stunned. I said, ‘No,’ but thought, ‘Dear God, do I have no support here?’”

On the next night, when she and her husband went out with friends, the other couples talked about what had happened, meaning to be distracting but not realizing the impact. The woman cried and was upset on what should have been a happy evening. Later that evening, there was a wonderful celebration that made the couple feel recognized and loved. But at the same time, the woman said, “I was exhausted.”

Back at work, those working with the accused were interviewed and the woman was also interviewed at home but was not ultimately called as a witness for the prosecution. People’s anxieties escalated—had this man been with people’s kids? The woman began to think about the potential of risk in the past for her kids. It was an environment of worry. In her own childhood and growing up, people had just never talked about sexual matters, especially with children. She had no information about how to handle the situation.

One day she answered her door to find the wife of the accused with a gift, crying, asking why work colleagues did not help, and asking for help that was impossible to give. Again, she had to stick to her convictions that it would not be right to be a character witness.

The culmination of all of this affected the woman’s life in practical ways. She avoided places where she might see the accused or his wife, and was

apprehensive about a possible chance encounter, for example, at the bank. At work, she was good at her job but very careful, trying to avoid any appearance of inappropriate touching, worrying that people might judge her and her department due to the conduct of one man. To deal with all this, combined with major emotional and physical responsibilities because of a tragedy in her extended family, she sought counselling. Again, it was not helpful. She did not feel that the workplace stress was recognized.

A year after the arrest, the man pleaded guilty to a reduced charge. By then, many of the woman's work colleagues were also angry and emotional and asked for help but did not get it.

Several years later, the woman did run into the convicted former colleague and they were able to speak; the woman felt that "it was a new beginning." She no longer felt she had to avoid running into the man or his wife. She also found out there was a professional licensing intervention, which reassured her about future risks.

Even decades later, she worries about the young man who was sexually touched and has heard that his subsequent life has been difficult and troubled, but she is not sure of this. She has heard rumours about settlements, but again does not know for certain. She has some information that helps, but does not have complete closure.

The woman giving testimony observed that keeping up with information from the Cornwall Public Inquiry has helped her understand more about the response to sexual abuse, particularly the anger of men who were abused when young. She had not really understood that anger when she saw it, but does now.

As she looked back, she expressed the usual feelings when someone finds themselves with a work colleague who took advantage of his position to abuse: "Should I have done something differently? Should I have guessed? What should I do now? How can I reconcile that someone who was a nice person did wrong?" This led to a discussion about the reality that those who may abuse can present a plausible front, and this allows them to deceive and abuse. As well, sticking to convictions is not always easy—it can be isolating.

The woman looked back at her experiences and had practical recommendations:

- Workplaces should have a committee or place to go to talk about suspected or actual sexual abuse within the workplace with supportive policies and procedures. For affected staff, this is an occupational health issue, and they should not be "on their own" in getting real help.
- Managers in organizations should have training to understand and support staff who are profoundly affected by the misconduct of others

in the workplace, for example, seeing the risk of “burnout” in staff as related to such incidents. The workplace needs to heal: “just going on” is not enough—those in charge need help to do this better.

The woman who gave testimony has carried an emotional burden of worry for a long time. She is now recognizing that she was grieving for the loss of a work environment she enjoyed before the abuse and for the lack of support at work when she needed it—and she was also grieving for the young man, and possibly other young men who were hurt.

The woman thanked her husband for supporting her as she worked through her feelings over time. She was appreciative of the chance to talk in informal testimony about the impact of abuse in her circumstances. The workplace and social impact of abuse is widespread, more than people realize and for a much longer time. This is a lesson for everyone to learn and for employers to recognize so that they can develop helpful responses.

## “Hard to Be the Real Me”

A man from Cornwall attended informal testimony with his sister, his younger brother, and a good friend. He explained that while he had “no faith” in the Cornwall Public Inquiry, he was attending because he wanted to ensure that his recommendations for the future were known—“to have my say in regard to my healing process.” He also wanted a record of his difficult life journey, as a child, young person, and adult. As a result, he did not want the opportunity to give informal testimony to pass by.

The man giving informal testimony came from a large family, of seven; he was the second youngest and had only one sister. His father was a labourer, holding various jobs such as a dock worker, foreman, and supervisor. His mother was a homemaker and suffered from lifelong depression, with prolonged periods of institutionalization. The man explained that he had discovered from child welfare records that even while he was yet “in the womb,” child welfare authorities had been involved with his family, although it did not appear as if much assistance was offered.

The man explained that his earliest recollections were from when he was about age four. His youngest brother was born and his mother was ultimately institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital, perhaps due to post-partum depression. The family was dispersed among several relatives for a period of about six to nine months. The exception was the new baby, who was returned home only briefly after the absence of the mother and then went to live with the eldest brother’s in-laws, for about two and a half years.

There was a period when the family was together, with the exception of the youngest, who was living with in-laws, and the oldest, who had married. The man recalls his mother as very loving; she would constantly show affection and tell the children she loved them: “This is something to treasure.” However, he explained that her frequent absences due to institutionalization for depression meant that the maternal bonding process between parent and child was disrupted, particularly for the younger ones. During this time, the father distanced himself from the family, seeking other relationships and developing into an alcoholic, instead of caring for his wife and children.

The man giving testimony reported that his victimization started when he was abused by a neighbour teenager and then by an older brother who was eight years his senior. The man giving testimony spoke of the person who first “robbed him of his childhood innocence”: a neighbour who was able to take advantage of the family’s difficult times. Prior to that abuse, the man testifying recalled positive interactions, “enjoying playful times with siblings and feeling good.” The abuse by the neighbour escalated over time, physically, sexually, and mentally, and

ultimately also involved his second oldest brother. The man giving testimony states that the neighbour also tried to sexually victimize another sibling and certainly did mentally and physically abuse other family members. To this day, the man wonders if the neighbour abused his own family as well and questions “whether it was learned behaviour or deviant behaviour and lust.”

He recalls that the abuse by his brother included physical, mental, and sexual abuse during the time the man giving testimony was about four to eleven years old. He recalled with terrible clarity being forced to perform oral sex and being sodomized while being punched in the kidney and stomach. Any resistance resulted in further abuse, including abuse for being too physically immature to engage in certain sexual acts. He explained, “The verbal and mental abuse that I endured during being sodomized and physically abused is something I have lived with every day of my life.” He reported, “I felt unprotected. I had nobody to rescue me, no family to turn to.”

His abusers were the oldest in their households, with absent or weak parents, and used that power to control much younger children. The impact of the prolonged and violent abuse was significant: “As a child, I always felt worthless. I was a loner. I did not feel loved ... I would walk around feeling empty.” The man giving testimony also recalled having trouble at school: even in the second or third grade, “the principal’s office became my second home” because he was easily offended and fought back when teased. This was because, the man giving testimony explained, “I have very low self-esteem and had a very hard time concentrating on schoolwork because I was always worried what was going to happen to me next.” Living in such circumstances of fear and degradation affected his growing mind, and the man reported that he developed learning disabilities. The man was placed in a special-education class because of “so-called learning and behavioural problems.” This made the situation worse: he felt “I did have something wrong with me,” and he was subjected to bullying from others. Responding to bullying resulted in “the strap,” but over time he ceased to even feel this pain.

In the late 1960s, the youngest boy and a sister in the family went into care. The man giving testimony lived with an older brother and then was reunited briefly with his mother, who had been released from hospital. An older brother also went into care. Although several siblings were in care, the man giving testimony indicates that the child welfare records do not identify him at that time. It appears that he was missed in the process of taking other children in the family into care. Concerning this period, when he was in the age range of eight to twelve years, he has no recollection of any home visits or inquiries into his situation or his welfare. When his parents separated, he ended up living with the brother who had abused him, and this created the opportunity for more abuse.

His school records became confused during the many changes in location, and the man testifying reported that this led to his being placed in a junior high school at too young an age. As the youngest in the school, he struggled with schoolwork and was bullied by the older kids. If he “fought back,” he received more discipline. Still his victimization at home continued: “I had no one to turn to and the people that I did try to tell did not hear my cries for help.”

At age thirteen, he was finally taken into care. However, he reported, his counsellor mentally and physically abused him, threatening him with “reformatory school” if he repeated any of the “outbursts” of behaviour at his junior high school. The man was expected to keep his grades up even though he lacked the foundation for more challenging work. He passed, but barely. In his care situation, he was beaten as “corporal discipline,” and this would trigger recollections of his physical abuse while he was sexually abused by his neighbour and brother. As a thirteen-year-old, he reported, “I started thinking of suicide. I didn’t feel loved and I had a hard time believing that anyone could love me.” He found a poem that reflected his feelings at the time:

### ***The Real Me***

*It's hard to be the real me*

*It's hard to show a smile when I really don't feel like smiling any more*

*It's hard to feel love when I don't feel loved*

*It's hard to admit that I'm wrong when I know I'm right*

*It's hard to live when I just don't feel like living any more*

*It's hard to be the real me.*

While he was in care with a sister and younger brother, the man reported, he was “the lead hand running the chores” at a large dairy farm. He described his day as a young teenager:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 4:45      | Rise in the morning, responding to a “hit” on the wall by the man of the house to get up |
| 4:45–7:30 | Feed and clean stables, prepare for milking and cleanup                                  |
| 7:45–8:15 | Breakfast  |
| 8:15–8:30 | Change into school clothes   |
| 8:45–3:15 | Bus to school and school   |
| 3:15–3:30 | Return from school   |
| 3:30–4:45 | Clean and preparation for milking  |
| 4:45–5:30 | Dinner   |
| 5:30–7:30 | Milking, evening chores  |
| 8:00      | Bed  |

This left very little time for schoolwork and recreational activities. This schedule continued until he was seventeen. During the early years, he reported, there was mental and physical abuse; as he grew older, it was largely mental abuse. Toward the end of this period, the man giving testimony reported, he began to find out that the man of the house was sexually abusing some of the girls in care in the same household. When the man giving informal testimony confronted one of the girls, to his horror, he indicated, the girl started to undress and offered to “let me do what the foster father and brother did,” because he had always been kind to her. He assured the girl, who was developmentally delayed, that he would not hurt her, and sought out her abuser. However, this incident caused a disturbing flashback to his own childhood abuse.

When he confronted his foster father, “everything became unravelled.” The man recalled, “His guilt I could see in him, and he told me never to talk to him.” Thereafter, the home environment was even more difficult as the two could not talk about day-to-day activities for work, closing out the man giving testimony. The man giving informal testimony felt he had no one to turn to—neither his foster mother nor outside authorities would listen. As a result, he withdrew into himself again. He felt that “people of authority who I turned to turned their backs on me.”

Distraught, not knowing who to turn to, the man giving informal testimony left the farm where he had been in care at the age of seventeen. He was refused social assistance; he then realized that he could not afford to complete his education unless he returned to the farm. He also felt an obligation “to protect my kid brother” and the girls left behind and exposed to sexual abuse. He indicated that his foster mother wanted him back—to do farm chores—but that the child welfare authorities did not permit him to return. The only other option was a group home or another farm. “In total despair,” the young man got three jobs to support himself and spent the rest of his time visiting his mother at a nursing home; he was his mother’s only regular visitor.

Many years later, at his mother’s nursing home, the man reported, he encountered a “large enough lady” who grabbed him, claiming, “He knows.” He realized that she was his foster sister and confirmed with the staff that her recollections of sexual abuse were indeed true. Even though he was now in his thirties, “Quietly I kept the pain inside, did not share with anyone what happened.”

The man giving informal testimony recalls that one of the issues for him on leaving his farm residence was that his kid brother was left behind. He reported that he later found out that his brother was a witness to a terrible confrontation between the foster mother and one of the girls regarding her sexual abuse by the foster father. The result was that the father left the house, the foster mother

assaulted the girl with the heel of a shoe, injuring her, and the kid brother was sent out to find the foster father. He found the man dead, having been electrocuted. The foster father had been in good health, so suicide was suspected. The girls were removed from the home within days, but the brother was not told what happened. Thereafter, the kid brother was treated very poorly by his foster mother and got little education. The man giving testimony feels child welfare authorities failed to protect his young brother and himself, and that the two of them had “had to raise themselves.” Today, the man giving testimony sees the impact for his brother, in his health and financial problems, and evidence of physical abuse over the years. The man testifying reported that the “most rewarding time of my life” was when he told his foster mother of her misconduct, including her use of belittling words, that “he would not amount to nothing.” When he successfully sold his house, for example, he told his foster mother of this financial success. In thinking of this, he does realize that his kid brother no longer sought validation from this woman while he still did.

After many years of work, the man giving testimony married and started his own business. He had his own house on a secure street and had two children. He was always overprotective of his children and wife, and on an occasion where he saw his abuser, he rushed his children away, locked himself in the garage, and was contemplating suicide. His wife demanded that “he explain himself,” but he told her only a little bit. During this time, the man reported, he was depressed, had flashbacks, and struggled with depression, “trying to keep everything a secret.”

In his late thirties, he reported, he “crashed” and sought help from a men’s group. Over several years he worked through his feelings toward those who perpetrated abuse and decided to report to the police. He indicated he thought they should confess their wrongdoings and “I was now on a mission: taking back control of my life.” He had come to understand that the shame and anger he had possessed was not his but his abusers’. He also started revealing his past to his wife, and his children “became aware of Dad’s dark secret.” It was also during this period that he became interested in the issues and individuals of Project Truth.

Because he felt that Project Truth was not well handled and he was discouraged by this, he reported, he thought, “If I come forward, who would believe me?” Despite this, or perhaps because of it, he started to be an advocate for other victims, referring them to services that had helped him and letting them know “most importantly that we are not alone and we have the right to be here.” Managing all this, proceeding with charges, and returning to school was more than a tough “balancing act.” It was, in his words, “heart-wrenching survival.” He does feel that in confronting his perpetrators, he can now say, “You raped my body, you raped my childhood innocence, you tried to rape me of a happy

adulthood, but you were unsuccessful because I have learned to take control back—of my life, my body, my soul.”

During this period, the man reported, he found increased notoriety, referring to several situations where, when he was out socially, he was approached by critical individuals who claimed to know of him. He reported being threatened by those in positions of authority or influence. He also felt that authorities showed a lack of respect to him and even articulated sympathy toward his abusers and also that his involvement “wasn’t looked upon very well at work.” He ultimately had a breakdown at work and left. In respect to his own business, he stated that some people withdrew their business or urged others to do this, due to his activism. Some people stood by him because he was a good worker, but ultimately he was unable to keep the business going.

In the end, both his brother and the former neighbour were convicted in relation to his abuse. His brother acknowledged the rape, although different technical terms were used in the charges. The man testifying also wrote his brother and told him to stop any contact, as “he had lost that right as a brother.” However, the man was disappointed with the fact that his brother was charged as a minor, and felt that insufficient “empathy and compassion” was shown by authorities, who were “not doing their job.”

Other impacts of abuse are physical, and the man testifying reported that he had to see kidney specialists due to the damage done when he was a child. The physician indicated that the damage was typical of those who were sexually abused as kids. The man has also needed medication for anxiety and other conditions. As he was self-employed, he had the additional stress of pharmaceutical bills. Flashbacks sometimes led to panic attacks, as he felt overwhelmed with betrayal, anger, and frustration. He suffers from migraine headaches.

Despite all this, the man reported, he had started to take control of his life: seeking counselling, telling his wife of his childhood experiences, explaining to his children why he was overprotective. He endeavours to place shame and blame on those who abused his body and his trust, rather than accepting the negative feelings caused by abuse. He stated:

Slowly I am learning how to get my basic needs met. I am learning that human touch is safe. I am learning that I deserve to be loved by myself and others ... I am learning that believing in myself and in my God will help me through this journey.

The man giving informal testimony indicated dissatisfaction with Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry, from the choice of Commissioner to interactions with legal, investigative, and counselling staff and representations

made about Counselling Support. For example, he thought that, in the order of cross-examination or submissions, those representing victims should have gone last so that victims would have “the last say.” He does not feel that he has had the “thorough and impartial inquiry” he wanted or was promised when the Inquiry was established at Queen’s Park. And although he has made many allegations of misconduct by individuals in the community, he indicated that in Phase 2, “nothing will be used.” He also recounted specific incidents directly affecting him and affecting others for whom he has high esteem and whom he believes were punished for “doing the right thing.” He takes the position that he should be compensated. He indicated he felt Cornwall Public Inquiry staff were insensitive and not doing a good job. He was also critical of some party lawyers for institutions and some institutional witnesses and felt there was a lack of sensitivity to victims generally. He has expressed dissatisfaction with some Advisory Panel members who affected his trust in the Inquiry. He believes that what he says “will fall on deaf ears.” He also criticized some institutional heads who have not seen the urgency of supporting adult survivors and in his view have not put inclusive processes in place, even while claiming to be inclusive.

In terms of recommendations, the man testifying thinks one local institution needs to be replaced and new, independent staff put in place. He thinks all institutions should have an independent “compliance officer” to ensure that they follow their own policies. He also thinks there should be an investigation into the Inquiry, and how it was set up, and its mandate.

The man giving testimony would also like to recommend expansion of services by The Men’s Project in Cornwall. He wants support for a safe house for men. He particularly wants specialized services for men and funding for courses for male survivors. Because many men abused as young people missed out on education, there should be support for men returning to school to upgrade their education. He also suggested that the maximum “pain and suffering” award through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is too low and needs to be increased significantly, particularly for older people who only have a few years to retirement and who need funds. For those who cannot realistically return to school, he suggests assistance with housing and basic financial planning and life skills training. As well, he thinks continuing some of the training and workshops that the Inquiry has offered would be valuable. While he was not satisfied with Phase 2 generally, he did find some workshops “fantastic” and thinks they helped raise awareness. In terms of awareness, he wants to change attitudes, so the public sees the little boy who was hurt, not the adult man. Reflecting on his own experiences, he commented, authorities “could not see the wounded child looking for safety, love and care.” He also wants stricter sentences and mandatory treatment for those convicted of sexual offences against children and youth.

In terms of the future, the man giving testimony plans to “concentrate on getting back, enjoying myself, having a good time with my kid brother, friends, my sister, getting back to his family.” He spoke lovingly of his grandson and of his struggle to ensure that the little boy was clearly identified as his son’s although the parents were not together. He was reminded that he deserves to be happy and was thanked for giving his heartfelt informal testimony despite his lack of trust in the Inquiry. The supporters were also thanked for coming and for showing caring for their friend and brother.

## “I Didn’t Know What Love Was”

A woman came to informal testimony with many friends. She had two reasons for choosing informal testimony: she wanted to contribute to saving children “the pain that accompanies sexual abuse,” but she also wanted to help herself—wanted to “live the days I have left believing in myself.”

She set the context for her informal testimony in her own words:

I have lived with abuse and the memories, the ghost, the nightmares, the hidden shame and the guilt of being abused most of my life. I am tired of hiding from unseen monsters, wearing masks to hide my true feelings, the shame instilled in me for such a long time. I was a child.

We learned to never say “no.” I was a child afraid of the consequences of telling; a little girl unable to trust anyone. I was simply a child not able to grow up in security and love that each child needs.

I would like to believe that this Inquiry will put a stop to all forms of sexual abuse in the Cornwall area. Not only abuse against children but abuse against all individuals, no matter the age, gender or race. But I must also admit to myself that this form of abuse has been going on for eons.

While we cannot stop all perpetrators, we must assist in trying to change the way child abuse is viewed and handled by different institutions.

We have to help each other and extend a hand to all victims. We have to try and educate the public so that the existence of abuse will be accepted and not hidden like it had been in the past.

We have to teach our children and all children to trust the same institutions that we have hated for so long and we must truly believe, once and for all, that we were children reaching out for love, just reaching out to individuals we were taught to believe would never hurt us.

I also believe that by testifying today, although I will not forgive or forget the hurt and pain I have felt for most of my life, I have started to take the first few of many tiny steps I must take towards a better understanding of myself.

The woman giving testimony was born in Québec, the middle child in a large family. Her parents, who both were professionals, relocated to the Cornwall/Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry area. Because of the move, her primary-school education was in Québec but her high school education was in Ontario. She attended university but did not complete her degree.

A younger brother died when she was a small child. When this happened, her parents left her in the care of relatives. The relatives were not loving people and often said or did “mean things.” She was frightened of one relative, who was developmentally delayed and largely mute. The house was dark—there was no electricity—and she had to share a bed with the woman who was developmentally delayed. Still a preschooler, she cried all night for several nights and was punished for keeping the others awake.

One night, an uncle came and took her to his bed. At first he was kind and cuddled her, creating a feeling of safety. He also gave her candy and made her feel “I was special.” But as time went on, “he became stranger and the cuddling turned to something else.”

When she was reunited with her parents, the uncle would come every few months and was always “touching me and all that.” He gave her a doll and put sexually explicit markings on it. But subsequently he went further and hurt her. She told a local priest during confession, and he in turn told the nuns who taught her. She was told she was at fault and that “I was going to Hell because I had committed such an awful sin.” At school she was isolated from the other kids and scrubbed by the nuns daily, to make her clean. At home, her older brothers started to abuse her, calling it “a game.” At this point she thought they loved her, and this abuse continued until her late teens. The family relocated again and lived close to the uncle, who came over and stayed several nights a week. It appeared that her parents “never noticed.” In addition, her parents were not supportive—for example, they did not visit her when she was in hospital with a serious physical illness, and for Christmas they gave her only school uniforms. She also felt she could not say anything at school, as she was told so many times before that it was her fault: “I believed it was my fault,” she recalled. One teacher noticed that she was not functioning well. He and his wife were kind but never asked why she was ill and doing so poorly in school. Later that year, the principal decided she should take a year off.

During the year off, at about age fourteen, she donned an old army coat to go to the store, where she was asked to drop off cigarettes to neighbours. At the neighbours’, her uncle and the neighbour sexually assaulted her. After returning home, she took pills, because “I was dying, I didn’t care any more. I was going to tell.” Telling her mother led to an admission to the hospital, but there was no follow-up. The tone of the hospital admission report was curt and dismissive,

and did not seem to include liaison with police. Her counsellor commented that he finds it representative of the attitudes of that era. Police response was hampered by her shame and unwillingness to say that she was wearing an old army coat. Later, she realized that the coat could have had good evidence on it.

A year or so later, she was pregnant. She had no boyfriend and never had, and she did not know she was pregnant. She was sent to a home for unwed mothers and made the difficult decision to put her child up for adoption. She felt it was better than bringing her child into the sexually abusive environment of her family home or explaining the probable parentage.

Oddly, when she returned home, it was “just like nothing ever happened,” except that one relative referred to her as a “whore.”

After high school, the woman testifying got married because “it was the only way I could get away and I had to get away.” Just before her wedding, she was forcibly kidnapped and sexually assaulted by family members. Several years later, she had a daughter, and to save money for a house, she moved back with her family. A family member offered her money for sex. She refused, but, she recounted, “I went through a period of my life where I believed that the only way anybody could ever love me was if I had sex with them. I didn’t know what love was.”

Her childhood had led her to have little faith in herself as an adult. “I kept dropping out of stuff,” she said. She had problems with trust—even with a kind psychiatrist, it took years to open up. She told her kids and her husband some things. However, they did not take it well, and she did not reveal everything. When she spoke to her mother as an adult, her mother was dismissive, noting that her uncle was dead—“Just let it be.”

As an adult, she was living in the country and there was a break-in by strangers. At first she thought it was lost hunters. She recalled that they hurt her dog, sexually assaulted her, tied her up, and stole various things. Her son, who had schizophrenia, found her and called the police. She felt that instead of responding, the police made her son “feel that he’s the one that did it and that I was protecting him.” Sadly, even recently her son asked her about the incident and she had to assure him he was not at fault. She does speak with this son regularly and went on vacation with him. She reported that she found subsequent police interactions were unproductive or hurtful, increasing her distrust.

The culmination of her experiences led her to withdraw from life not long after the break-in, living in one room and never going out. She was in despair and was eventually hospitalized. She left her husband; she commented in the informal testimony that their relationship had been poor for years. She felt she needed to start her life again, and took steps to have counselling and to live away from her family and from being blamed.

Her experience with the Cornwall Public Inquiry was mixed. She reported a negative incident with one person that led to angry calls from family members. But she is “starting to trust again.” She has had very few friends in life, but now she has several, including one who is “like a sister, but not a mean sister.” She is recreating the positive family she did not have. She volunteers to help others. People enjoy her sense of humour, her artistic talents, and her intellect, and want to keep her in their lives.

But still she recalls, “They took away my faith in God, my sense of fair justice. They took away my sense of security … I will never get that back.”

The woman giving testimony feels it is important that people see the experience of abuse from a child’s point of view—how a child feels, how a child sees adults, what it is like to be trapped and dismissed and not believed by adults. She thinks there should be more of this through the Cornwall Public Inquiry. To do this, the woman giving testimony wrote a powerful short story. Her chosen sister read it aloud to all attending informal testimony with her, and she wants to share this story with others.

## Short Story: The Hiding Place

*Curled tightly into the tiniest of balls, Carol lay on the patchwork quilt that covered her bed.*

*Alert, she waited silently, fearing the darkness that would soon hide all that she knew. All that was safe to a little child.*

*Thirty, forty minutes passed as she shivered lonely and scared in the light cast from the moonlight. A noise! Carol jumped and held her breath for a moment or two. Yes, the sounds were real; she had truly heard noises.*

*Climbing slowly, her brothers stomped loudly on each wooden stair, whined at their mother, pleading again and again for the privilege of staying up a little longer, as they made their way up to the two largest bedrooms.*

*Carol strained her ears and tried to listen to the muffled whispers coming from their rooms. She could not hear much of the conversation going on behind closed doors.*

*Carol turned her head and stared at Anna and Marie, her younger sisters, sleeping soundly side by side on the single bed beneath the window. In the moonlight she could see them; their legs completely intertwined, the sheet and blankets hardly covering their tiny bodies.*

*Carol glanced at both girls fast asleep. She jealously fantasized about the dreams they were having: dreams of princesses and fairies, of magical places filled with laughter, music, dreams of bright sunny days. Anger welled up inside of her. She could not understand how they could be so near to her and still could not sense the chaos she felt a mere six feet away.*

*A rasping laugh brought Carol back to her reality. She climbed to her knees and returned to her watchfulness. Again, alone in the darkness.*

*Carol waited and listened to the nightly noises the sleeping house made. Her brothers must have fallen asleep. She heard no more noises from their rooms.*

*Close to sleep Carol had to fight harder to stay awake. She chewed the inside of her cheeks, biting so hard that she soon tasted blood flowing in her mouth. She had to stay awake, aware, on guard. "One, two, three, four, five," she counted to herself. By the time she had reached "seventy-two," the house stood silent.*

*Carol quietly, carefully stood up from her bed and tiptoed to the door of her bedroom. Cautiously, she stood by the door, frozen in time, waiting for a sound—any sound—to reach her ears.*

*An eerie silence seemed to hang in the air. Carol held the doorknob gently in her tiny trembling hand, holding her breath. She slowly turned the round knob lightly and opened the door.*

*Carol stood for a few moments; her eyes alert, focused intensely on the long dark hallway.*

*Slowly, seemingly in a trance, she walked past the bathroom door, past the two doors behind which her brothers now most certainly lay sleeping, to the very end of the hallway.*

*She now stood in front of the door to the large hall closet; the closet that would once again tonight serve as both as her sanctuary and her prison.*

*Carol knew she had very little time to make the closet into her secret place before Charlie would once again emerge from the staircase searching for her. She knew that he too would have to listen for the sounds of her parents sleeping in their bedroom on the main floor of the house.*

*He would have to wait a little longer to claim his prize. This would give Carol the time she so desperately needed.*

*Pulling open the white sliding door of the closet she winced in horror at the scraping noise the door made sliding along the metal tracks secured to the floor. Quickly she pushed herself into the darkness of the closet. Taking hold of her mother's heavy winter coat she made her way to the furthest, deepest corner. Carol had not taken the time to close the door behind herself; she feared the noise of the scraping track would betray her.*

*Sitting on the floor in the closet, atop the many pairs of Sunday shoes and winter boots, Carol wrapped herself with her mother's coat, disappearing into the darkness. Minutes ticked into hours as she waited, frightened and alone. She imagined tiny shining eyes staring at her; eyes that belonged to the ugly hairy grey house spiders that veiled the closet walls with sticky webs, spiders that could kill her with their poisonous toxic lethal venom.*

*Carol needed to believe that sitting perfectly still, not moving, cloaked with her mother's heavy coat, she became invisible to the creatures she feared so much.*

*In the dark stillness she waited for the first light of the morning sun to reach the half-open door. Exhaustion took over and she fell into a troubled sleep. Dreams of monsters and pain invaded her young mind. She tried to scream but no sounds came from her lips.*

*Opening her eyes just ever so slightly, Carol searched the darkness in front of her. The harsh realization of the moment made her stiffen and she now knew that the pain she felt was not from her nightmare but from her living world. Charlie had found her, had found her secret hiding spot, her sanctuary. The pain was not in her dreams but rather the stench of stale beer, of cigarettes, the hands touching her face were real.*

*Tears welled behind her eyes. She wanted to vomit, to cry out, but instead she just swallowed hard. She wanted to scream out in pain but the guilt and shame conceived in her mind kept her silent.*

*Again and again Charlie would touch her skin with his large dry hands. His lips would touch her face and she'd be nauseated in disgust.*

*Carol's mind raced. She knew that she would have to find another hiding place, a place where no one would ever hurt her again.*

*She closed her eyes and started to count; "one, two, three, four." The numbers got larger and more complex; she needed to flee, to escape; become an "absolute." "Three hundred and forty one, three hundred and forty two." Now the two little eyes that had peered at the monster mere minutes earlier were closed, shut so firmly that it sent a surge of pain shooting through her head.*

*Fear mixed with pain overpowered the small child. She had to leave, to run, to hide. Where? Where could she go? Panic filled every thought she had. Finally in total desperation her mind did the only thing it could: it allowed her to escape inside herself to a place so far away, a place so deep that no one would ever find her or hurt her again.*

*The little girl that had played outside in the warm sunny air was gone and would not come back.*

*In the mere trickle of a few seconds that child was gone.*

## “A Whole New Chapter”

A man came with his wife and her family and friend to give informal testimony. Recently married, he reminisced about meeting and falling in love with his wife, attracted by her childlike qualities and innocence. He recalled that she had at one time been in bad living conditions and hated her apartment, but she persevered, saved, and got a new, tidy, well-furnished space. Proud to have been invited to a party there, the man realized that his feelings of friendship and admiration were something more. But it was some time before the woman could trust him. Indeed, it was only when he demonstrated his sincerity in helping her in recovering from an operation that “we started a relationship and never looked back.”

Early on in the relationship, he heard about his new love’s childhood, of her separation from family and of physical and mental abuse by those who should have cared for or protected her. She explained how she felt unloved, “like she didn’t belong,” and inflicted pain on herself and, constantly ran from her childhood pain. She had nightmares; her leg would shake; she would cry for hours. Sometimes she feared leaving her apartment for weeks at a time, “scared of her own shadow.”

His own family life was stable and his parents, immigrants to Canada, were so solid that he “could only imagine how terrible it was for her.” His parents, he said, were “awesome,” his dad was “a real good guy,” and he had great brothers and sisters, one in particular who always helped him with life problems.

His own life had had its “ups and downs,” but he looks back on his career and on his current work in “serving and protecting” with pride and has now recognized his own capacity to give the unconditional love he gives his wife. Looking back, he realized that he had always been concerned about spousal abuse and for kids who acted out. He found that when he was kind and respectful, kids “opened up” and told him why they were acting as they did—often disclosing abuse. The man giving testimony described himself as “not very authoritarian.”

When his wife and he married, he recounts that she retained her birth name. This had special significance for her. Her documentation was in the name of either her former husband or her abusive deceased adoptive parents, and she could not go back to her birth name. To recover her name and her identity, the man testifying helped her through a legal change-of-name procedure. He felt strongly that she should have proper documents in her own name. Now “she feels that for once in her life she is a real person. Having her name back legally was very important, so when we married in 2007, she retained her own name.”

Over time, the man giving testimony noticed his wife’s low self-esteem, which he attributed to her troubled childhood. She would say she was “evil,” when in fact

she is loving, looks after him, and is always caring for his health. She said she was not “sociable,” when in truth “she is friendly and pleasant and makes friends easily.” He reported that she does have an “addictive personality”—binge eating, chain smoking, gambling more than she or he can afford—but she is trying to reduce these tendencies with medication and by voluntarily excluding herself from gambling places. She has stopped drinking and is not tempted to drink. He noted in considering her interest in gambling, that winning makes her feel important, while losing makes her near suicidal. Her husband, having seen the harm in gambling in his work, wants his wife to avoid it. She often neglects herself and needs to learn to care for herself—to recognize, for example, that she needs to stop smoking.

Despite being in a loving and caring relationship now, because of her past she is often reserved and sensitive about sexuality—in movies, for example. She withdraws, he said, and “no matter what I say or do, I cannot reach her.” He finds that, in time, as he gives her emotional space, she returns to being engaged in their relationship.

He feels that her lack of self-esteem translates into problems at work. Her fear of disciplining others results in bullying or people taking advantage of her, knowing she will not “stand up to them.” She also, he said, feels uncomfortable at some social gatherings, where she feels other women are “highly educated and sophisticated.” She was reminded she “has just as much going for her.” She also gives herself little credit for her talents: she can draw well and writes eloquently. He said, “She has a sense of humour and makes people laugh all the time. She is a funny lady with an infectious smile.” Yet she finds it hard to accept compliments or to hear “I love you.” She cannot accept herself as “loveable, caring and generous.” She struggles with life’s setbacks: “her first response is to run away,” to feel unworthy of life. Because of this, when she takes actions that shows poor financial judgment, he is patient with her, seeing it as a result of her early life. He does, though, place limits on her spending, both to ensure their future together and to help her cope with the consequences of her actions. He noted that when she makes financial mistakes, she is like a “child who has done something wrong” and is full of grief, so he returns to the issue only when she is ready. At the same time, helping her avoid the situations that ultimately upset her is also necessary, in his view, and he thinks it necessary to be open about this. For example, she feels bad when he has to work overtime to make more money, and he also wants the overtime to decrease by controlling expenditures. He does not think this issue should be hidden; he finds that when being open, later people will say, “I’m so glad you brought that up.”

The man observed that the opportunity for informal testimony had given his wife “inner strength” and “new insight.” He hopes the experience will allow her

to grow, to reach out and take the counselling help she needs, and to “finally end this chapter of her life.” He sees this as a “first step in a totally positive and healing way,” and added that she “deserves to feel whole and well and she does not need to feel the shame and pain she has carried all these years.” He was pleased that she would be going to counselling: “She should have had counselling a long time ago,” he said.

In talking about their life today, he said that he and his wife “enjoy themselves all the time,” just making breakfast, walking the dogs, riding his motorbike, enjoying the neighbours—everyday life. He was pleased too to see her strengthen her ties with her children. He commented that he had developed a good bond with her sons, who are kind to him. One son, who was at the informal testimony, said that he enjoys “hanging out” with his mother’s husband. But the son also recognizes that his mom’s husband does “make sacrifices to be in the relationship.” The son added, “He is a blessing in my mother’s life.” Both sons want to support that relationship. The son who was at the informal testimony laughed: “They are so cute together.” The son observed that both he and his siblings, in looking for their own life partners, have tended to look for families like the kind his mother’s husband had—large and supportive.

The man giving informal testimony indicated that plans are going forward to retire, to travel, to lead a healthy and happy life, to strengthen family relationships with both her family and his, and to improve their finances. The man giving informal testimony concluded that he felt that “this is a real turning point … it’s definitely a major change. It’s set forth a new journey for me. I’m not stopped in my tracks any more … This has opened a whole new chapter.”

## “I Have No Future”

A man from the Cornwall area came with his counsellor to give informal testimony. He reported that he was sexually abused from the time he was twelve years old. He was abused by three different males who were in positions of trust and authority toward him. Two of the abusers also abused several of the man’s siblings. For one abuser, the man’s brother disclosed the abuse and as a result, the abuser was charged and convicted. However, the man recalls that the involvement with the reporting caused problems within his family. His brother was subsequently removed from his family of origin and went to live with another family. This has had a negative impact on the man and his family. The man giving testimony has very little contact with this brother today. He reported that his family still has very strained relationships stemming from the abuse and from the consequences of what happened after the abuse was reported. He describes it all as “a big ordeal.” He also reported that because one situation of abuse occurred when he was at camp, he had to walk away from a place and activities that he otherwise enjoyed to escape his abuser. This is another example of loss for him in his life.

The impact of the sexual abuse has been far-reaching in this man’s life: he said that he has “lost his whole life” as a result of it. He turned to drugs to cope with the pain of the abuse and to theft to support his drug habit. His relationships with his previously close family have been strained. He reported that his mother, especially, blames herself for the abuse, even though she was not involved in it and did not know. The man also reported that he feels guilt for not telling anyone about the abuse at the time that it happened in order to stop the abusers from hurting more victims.

The man dropped out of school in grade 9 and began working to support himself. While he enjoyed his job, which he held for over ten years, he was often overwhelmed by the memories of the abuse and by the continued court involvement, as he had to repeat his story time and time again, which would trigger memories and flashbacks. These feelings led to increased drug use and abuse and to periods of decreased functioning. He is currently receiving a disability pension. He reported that when he is overwhelmed, he often retreats inwardly, into his own mind, and dissociates from the world around him.

All of his abusers were subsequently charged, and going through the criminal trial process has taken its toll on this man, particularly due to the lengthy process. He did, however, say that he felt good about going through the court process, as he believed it would help stop these men from abusing other children and help stop the cycle of abuse. In addition, he felt that his own disclosure helped others come forward with their own accounts of abuse, which he felt would assist the criminal process generally. He was disappointed, though, that some sentences

were not long and feared that some of his abusers may reoffend. He feels that they cannot be trusted around children. He is pleased that people from the Parole Board keep him informed so that he can express his views.

The man reported that he does not cope well with his abusive history, although he has been making some progress during ongoing counselling with a counsellor he likes and trusts. He is also considering addiction counselling or drug rehabilitation in the future to help him with his drug abuse. He expressed hurt that people say, if you go to court or for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, that “you’re just going for the money.” He explained, “I was hurt my whole life, and it still hurts. You know, it’s a little cash to help my life.”

He has problems with trust: he does not trust anybody. He said that it is his belief that he would have had a good life if the abuse had not happened. He indicated that he had hard-working, strict parents who had done their best to raise up their children well. If the abuse had not intervened, his path in life would have been different. At this time, however, he does not feel that he has a future, stating, “There’s no future for me.” The outcomes of his abusers’ court proceedings, as well as his own court proceedings, constantly weigh on his mind. He does comment, though, that “I’ve got a good girlfriend who helps me out. Maybe I lean on her too much but that’s the good thing I have got going in my life too, my girlfriend and my son.” He wants things to be better for his son than they are for him, and he hopes that when current court proceedings are over, he can look forward to positive changes in his own life.

## “I Want My Story to Be Heard ... I Want Everybody’s Story to Be Heard”

A man came from out of province with his wife to give informal testimony. He recounted a life of anger and struggle after a long history of sexual abuse by several men in positions of authority and trust, as well as physical and emotional abuse by his caretakers.

He was from a large family. He and a younger sister were placed in care when he was two years old, where he stayed until he turned sixteen. The two lived in various care homes throughout their childhoods. The man recalls only one placement over his whole childhood as being a good one, where the caregivers cared about the children in their care and were not interested only in money. However, both before he moved into this home and after he was moved out, his life was much more difficult, with abuse continuing over a long period of time.

He began to report the abuse that he suffered when he was eight years old, but, he said, no one listened to him. He continually ran away from home up until he was sixteen, but no one ever asked him why he was behaving this way. Instead, he was only threatened with being sent to training school if he continued to push back. He recalled other children in the same situation, many of whom ended up in worse situations than he is in. Fortunately, he recounts that one brother had a good foster-home placement.

After leaving care when he was sixteen, the man became involved in organized crime. He abused drugs, but, he said, he stopped using drugs twenty years ago and has been “clean” since, through the help of Narcotics Anonymous. He said that he overdosed on drugs three times in the past. He has also spent a considerable amount of time in jail. During that time in jail, he began to study toward a university degree, although he did not ultimately finish it after his release. He has taken anger-management classes to control his rage. He still drinks—he drinks to “get plastered” and to forget. But, he points out, “I never hurt a child,” unlike those who hurt him and his sister.

He reported having a difficult relationship with his mother, who still lives in Cornwall. His father has passed away. While he says he has forgiven his parents for giving him up to care, he cannot forget that it happened, or that the abuse he suffered was a result of being in care. He recalled that he did not have any visitation with his parents for several years after going into care. After he turned sixteen, he returned to live with his parents until he went to prison. He did not have contact with his father from then until shortly before his father’s death, before the man’s release from prison. He did, however, find out, when he was in his thirties, that his father had been abused in training school, and he encouraged his father to report this.

Looking back, the man reported, he had not cared about anything except “partying hard,” drinking, and doing drugs. He hadn’t cared about his actions and had felt no guilt for acting the way he did, although he added that he does now feel guilt about some of the things he did to those he hurt who did not deserve it. He said that he did not, and still does not, respect authority.

Until recently, the man had been living away from Cornwall with his wife of three years and had been holding steady, well-paid employment. He reported having lived a quiet life for the past several years, spending time with his wife and with friends, and working hard. Recently, however, he decided to quit his job and return to Cornwall to deal with his past, losing in the process what he had built up. He has found this process very difficult, noting that he is a very different person in Cornwall than when he is at home. In Cornwall, he is a very angry person, with a lot of rage. He feels anger and frustration that no one listened to him—not when he was a child, and not now: “I want my story to be heard … I want everybody’s story to be heard.” He finds that he feels triggered by memories in Cornwall and is frustrated when others say that “they do not recall.” He also reported a frustrating experience getting his own childhood records. The man said, about trying to get help or information, “You’re batting a ball that just keeps coming back to you. It’s like playing table tennis by yourself.”

The man expressed anger toward those who tell him to “move on” and to “get over it.” He said that he was robbed of his childhood and that he wants “justice” for the abuse but is not sure that he can ever get it. Despite this, he has taken some healing steps. For example, he now sees a counsellor on a weekly basis. He tries to focus on making his future a better one. He expresses his sadness about the past by riding his motorcycle—when he is riding, he is in his “happy place.”

The man stated that he continues to deal with his difficult past so that children, such as his nephew, will not have to go through the same type of abuse in the future. He believes that there must be a better screening system in place for those who have access to children so that children do not become targets of abuse.

## “The Real Truth”

A woman came from out of town with her family to give informal testimony. “I desperately want to have time to tell my story. I went through a lot of emotions putting everything on paper. It is so important to me that I tell everything I wrote,” she said. Before proceeding, she wanted to recognize her circle of supporters:

*Her biological sister*—“We are here for each other. I hope she will find the strength and courage to tell her story.”

*Her dear and wonderful friend whom she met at work*—“We remain close and share many coffees together. She is a very caring, sweet and loveable lady! I am blessed to have her in my life.”

*Her son*—“I hope he walks away from here today with a better understanding of me ... I hope he sees me in a new light. I would like him to find his mom here, the real mom he should have had years ago. I hope this helps him heal some of the pain he has.”

*Her husband*—“I need him to hold me, encourage me and give me his strength to tell my story. I need my loving and gentle soul mate beside me.”

In starting her informal testimony, she noted that although she appreciated the opportunity to tell her story, it makes her “a little sad” to speak anonymously: “Not having my name attached to my story makes me feel somehow that it’s not validated. It has no face.”

She started the informal testimony with words from the character Susanna in *Girl, Interrupted*, words she has said many times in her life:

I know what it’s like to want to die. How it hurts to smile. How you try to fit in but you can’t. How you hurt yourself on the outside, trying to kill the thing on the inside.

She relates to the internal pain being so great, she cut herself to “feel outside pain, to keep the inside from engulfing me.”

She starts her informal testimony by saying, “I would have loved to have had the chance to confront my abusers: the people who twisted my need, distorted my vision, ended my dreams, numbed my feelings, took my innocence and my trust.”

The woman testifying recalled being taken from her birth family in the Cornwall area as a young child. Initially, she was in the care of her biological grandparents, who lived in the basement of an institution as caretakers. Her grandfather sexually abused her, in one case claiming he was giving her a “treatment for worms.” It was only when she asked friends as an adult about this “treatment” that she realized it was part of his sexual abuse. When she was

about five years old, her grandfather promised her a “beautiful blonde curly-haired doll with the prettiest dress I had ever seen, if I would just touch him and let him touch me.” When she got the doll, she cut off all its hair: “I carried this guilt and shame with me for the rest of my life.”

It was at this early age that she learned to deal with the pain by “wandering in thought and not paying attention whenever anything unpleasant happened.” She reported “actually leaving my body” in order not to feel or experience mentally what was going on.

Subsequently, she and her younger sister went into care, separated from other sisters. She recalls verbal humiliation, being told, “No one wants you. You’ll be lucky if you ever get adopted.” When she cried for “Mommy and Daddy and why they did not come and get me,” she reported, she got a cruel and hurtful answer—that her father was a drunk and didn’t want her and was told, “Your mother is dead! She was found dead, naked in a ditch. She was worthless, just like you!” In fact, her mother was not dead, but it was years before the woman testifying found this out. The answer she got made the child feel she was a “bad seed” who would “die in a ditch and nobody would care.”

Her first experience in care was in the country, where she experienced sexual abuse and physical discipline, such as being locked in a closet for not eating all her food, and being made to kneel for hours, nose to the wall. Her foster father took her to a “farm” area to be sexually abused. Attempts to report were rebuffed as “imagination” and she was told that “no one would hurt me unless I deserved it.” As a result, she had the perception that she was a “bad child and bad things happened to bad children.”

At nine, she was separated from her sister and adopted, going to live quite far away. Her perception was that this would be her new family; when she had been punished in the past, she would daydream about a different life, creating a new family. But when she called her adoptive father “Daddy,” he sternly responded—“I am not your Daddy.” She reports both physical and emotional abuse—not spanking or a “ruler on the hand,” but being “beaten till I could barely stand up.” When people noted bruises, she would lie, saying she had fallen down the stairs: “It’s funny no one picked up on it, since we lived in a bungalow.” She recalls one particular beating as representative of her many experiences:

I was 10 years old. He ripped off my clothes, tossing me around the room like a rag doll, my body slamming into furniture and walls. I would run around the room in frenzy, trying to avoid his blows. I fell to my knees, trying to cover my head with my arms ... but the razor belt would keep landing on my naked body ... over and over again ... I was shaking like I had been tossed into a tub of ice cubes, my body jerking uncontrollably. I ended up cowering in a corner, like some terrified

beaten dog. At that very moment I was more animal than human. I remember not the pain of the razor belt, but the indignity and inhumane feeling I had ... like I was an animal ... I have never forgotten that feeling.

She also recalls physical and psychological abuse, such as being yelled at for hours, told she was “worthless, stupid, ugly and retarded and would never amount to anything.” She would respond without emotion, sitting still, thinking any response would lead to more “emotional badgering.” One night she was hauled out of bed and made to watch the end of a movie starring Susan Hayward, whose character was on death row and was to be electrocuted. The point was made that she would end up like the movie character.

She recalled that her adoptive mother would supervise her washing and would scrub her genitals until they were raw: “I hated having baths and being naked in front of her, but I hated her more for touching me, taking away my dignity, making me feel ashamed and dirty.”

When she was thirteen, her adoptive father died suddenly. She was relieved as she feared that this man “hated me and would one day kill me.” She had told a school counsellor of her abuse, but there was no follow-up.

Shortly after that she began to run away regularly: “Running away became a way of life for me.” Her adoptive mother’s response was to involuntarily admit her to a psychiatric hospital, where she spent her sixteenth birthday. The woman testifying said she got little help but did “hook up” with an older man of thirty, who became the “first of many abusive relationships.”

After a period of hitchhiking and moving from place to place, she married very young and had four children in close succession:

I wanted the white picket fence and lots of babies. Maybe this would heal me, fill the huge hole inside of me. It made things worse, as I didn’t know how to love back or how to nurture and raise children.

She recalled feeling overwhelmed, not coping. She divorced and left her children in order to “fix” herself. Instead, she ended up in an abusive relationship of many years’ duration. While she eventually broke away, by then her children had removed themselves from her life. She felt they were “tired of seeing me self-destruct ... and not having the courage to change my situation.” She felt her future could be as a “bag lady,” living on the street: “I never saw a future for myself. I never saw anyone caring or loving me, not even my children.”

Having reached this low point, she in fact found the strength to change, over about a four-year period. She got a good job, had fun with girlfriends, and got her

own place. She felt she was reliving the “teen–young 20s” times she had missed, feeling part of a support group of friends and co-workers. She felt comfortable as a single person: “A bit of my spirit came alive … Life started to change for me and I stopped looking for someone or something to heal my pain.”

The woman giving testimony reported:

And then something truly wonderful happened … without me looking or wanting … a very caring and loving man came into my life. At first I was scared and didn’t trust him, but soon it was apparent that he was a special person. He was open and honest, he had integrity, was genuine, sincere, he was gentle and caring and so easy to love.

He loves me unconditionally and has shown me what life is supposed to be, what love truly is, how love doesn’t hurt. That no matter how I feel or what I’ve done, good or bad, I am loved and worthy of love and I am loveable … He is my rock, the only person I have ever known to always mean what he says and says what he means. He is also the only person who has ever loved me more and more over time and has never, ever hurt me or abused me in any way. He has my heart, he has my love, and he has my eternal gratitude for seeing deep within me, the innocent girl, who only wanted to be loved and happy.

In addition to a positive relationship with her new husband, she reported the joy she has had in reconnecting with her sister in person during informal testimony. Even after decades, she feels like “I was the big sister and to me she was the little sister. I always treat her like that.” She is not as close to her other sisters due to their separation as children, but has been in touch over the last twenty-five years.

She is working on her relationship with her children. She said, “Well, that is one good thing out of my life. I did have beautiful children.” She hopes for more contact: “It would be nice if we were all a family again, all the kids, and have them in my life, do the birthdays, Christmas—natural, normal.” She has visited regularly with her sons over the last five years, which gives her so much joy: “They hug me with big open arms, they phone me, they tease me and make me laugh, make me cry, and above all they make me feel like I am their mom again—I believe they love me!”

The woman testifying is also planning to go to counselling: “I think it’s time.” One goal is to better deal with the anxiety she often feels, particularly at work. Another is to stop “causing some type of chaos in my life when things are going great.” She thinks she does this because of doubting that “I’m worthy of good things and good people in my life.”

Creative activities are also an option and outlet. She sketches beautifully, although self-taught, and has started several novels based on incidents in her life, her hitchhiking days, and the people she met, one of which has a “movie-like beginning.” She realizes, “I’m probably capable of a lot more now in my life” but still feels that without the abuse, she could have been an artist or writer. Her potential was there, but abuse prevented its realization. Her talent was revealed in a moving poem, which follows this testimony.

In thinking about what could be done to prevent repetition of her childhood experiences by other kids, she felt that people should be more aware. If they see injuries, they should ask, and not accept excuses that do not seem very likely: “It’s not just textbook learning—people have to take off the rose-coloured glasses and know that in the real world terrible things can happen.” As well, she commented that if kids “act out” or cry, those should be seen as signs: “Children act out for reasons. People need to read that, I think.”

The woman giving testimony summarized many aspects of her life. She has found her biological sisters and parents. The sisters shared their stories. All the sisters “fell through the cracks of the system” and were abused and had difficult life journeys. However, when they tried to tell their story to a newspaper, it was not published—it was called, ironically, “opening up a can of worms.” Her father is dead, destructive and abusive to the end. Her mother is remarried and lives in another province with more children.

She had many reasons for coming to informal testimony—a desire to reach a turning point, a new chapter in her life. But she also told her story because:

It was time to finally speak out loud of the abuses I endured, to finally have a voice that will be heard. I want to let the ones who put me in abusive situations to know that they failed. As a child I should have been protected and valued. There should have been caring, insightful and protective people in my life. I suffered and struggled all my life because a system that was supposed to protect me, was actually the reason why I suffered and endured so much abuse and pain. I’ve been at the edge of darkness for so many years. I thought for sure I would go insane if the pain didn’t go away.

It has only been through God’s divine intervention and an army of guardian angels that I never did a “postal” at some fast food restaurant, and even more amazingly I didn’t commit suicide.

That is the real truth.

## POEM

# *A Child's Cry*

*Chains of ancestors long foregone,*

*An umbilical cord to the newborn.*

*Blood tainted by lust, greed,*

*selfishness and pride.*

*Passed on to each child,*

*wounds of war raging inside.*

*Each wishing, each wanting,*

*Another place, another time.*

*A gentler beginning, a kinder end,*

*Would have been the choice of most of them!*

## “The Ripple Effect”

A woman came forward to give informal testimony, recounting being sexually abused by her older brother when she was about eight to ten years old. She was one of the younger children in a large family that she describes as close-knit and as a good family with a wonderful mother. The abuse usually happened while the woman testifying was asleep, although she recalls waking up at least once while being abused. Once she told her mother about the abuse, however, it stopped immediately. She reported feeling supported and believed by her mother in her disclosure of the abuse. The woman and her brother did not talk of the abuse until twenty years later, when he offered her an apology for abusing her. She did, however, report that she felt that he was constantly pushing her away during her teenage years. This was difficult as her father had passed away when she was about ten, and had been a drinker and sometimes physically abusive to her mother. And, sadly, her mother died young as well. As a result, the woman agreed that she felt “she carried that load and pain of a ten year old pretty much on her own.”

The woman and her brother have remained close throughout the years. For a time, she stated that she had put the abuse behind her and carried on with her life; however, the existence of the Inquiry has brought back a lot of negative feelings for her. She reports feeling shame and embarrassment about her abuse and does not want her friends or co-workers to know that she was abused, as she feels it will reflect badly on her family, especially her parents. While her husband knows of the abuse and has been supportive, she has not told her children. She feels that they would not understand her continued relationship with her brother if they knew about it. She is proud of her role as a mother and of how close she has been to her own family.

The woman’s brother himself reported being abused by an authority figure for an extended period of time. She expressed anger and a feeling of betrayal toward her brother for focusing on his own history of abuse without publicly acknowledging that he abused her and that the abuse impacts her as well as him. For example, he did not tell his wife that he had abused his sister. The woman herself told his wife; the wife expressed shock and that “she did not know.” The woman giving informal testimony indicated that she felt both hurt and guilt as a result of this discussion.

The abuse has also impacted her trust of authorities. She reported that when her son was in high school, he was invited to a cottage by a religious authority figure. She would not allow him to go. She knew that it was inappropriate. However, she herself has remained a person of faith who attends church. She does not see the whole Church as wrong, in the way she feels that her brother does.

She also reported being harassed by a former employer. She stated that this harassment brought back negative feelings and the vulnerability that she experienced when being abused by her brother. She described the impact: “It was a ripple effect,” affecting her work and her personal life. She felt that her employer targeted her because she was not forceful or was vulnerable, although the employer also harassed others. Again, she felt there was a betrayal and an abuse of power, much like what she felt when she was a child.

She stated that she had seen a counsellor in the past but that she had stopped going and did not find it particularly helpful. She expressed some ambivalence about whether it would be helpful for her to continue counselling with respect to her feelings related to the sexual abuse. Those honoured to be listening to her informal testimony told her she would be welcome to try again, commended her for coming forward to talk about the impact of those who are abused going on to abuse others, and also commended her for her personal resilience.

## “A Billion Atomic Bombs Going Off”

A group of supporters gathered to hear informal testimony from a man in his fifties with a long and complex history and a difficult life journey. All his supporters expressed their care for the man giving informal testimony and their sense of honour in having been asked to attend his informal testimony.

Starting his story in early childhood, the man explained that his father was in the armed services and was rarely at home. His birth mother was not conscientious—she would neglect to feed her son and would go out, leaving no one to care for him. He recalls having been, as a toddler, “real cold and real hungry—and alone.”

The story of moving from his mother’s to a neighbour’s who had been his babysitter was one relayed to him by the babysitter, who ultimately became his adoptive mother. His birth parents had gone out and left him alone with no food or covering. He cried incessantly until the neighbour got him. This was in the middle of the night. He recalls that he then was with the babysitter a great deal, but he also has a recollection of being asked as a preschooler whether he wanted to stay with the babysitter or return to his birth mother. He also recalls his babysitter saying his birth mother was “no good,” which troubled him. Despite all, “I loved my mother.” In the end, though, it was natural that he would go to the babysitter, who fed him and kept him warm.

While his basic needs were met in his new home, his emotional needs were not. He reports there was little affection and “a lot of yelling and a lot of arguments.” He has snatches of recollections of these early years: seeing his birth father for the last time, living in various houses with other relatives, his African-animal toys, a letter from his birth mother with money.

In his adoptive family, he had a brother who was considerably older; all the children were adopted. The man giving testimony said that he was very timid and withdrawn as a child and could talk only to his adoptive mother. Before he was age five, he recalls, his eldest brother, then a teenager, started to pull down his pants and fondle him. Over the years, “it got progressively worse and worse, until I was about 12, almost 13 years old.” At age ten, he tried to escape the abuse by running away with his cousin, who was also being abused. The abuse by his brother often involved other children as well as other teenaged abusers living in the neighbourhood. The runaways were picked up by the police but were too afraid and ashamed to say why they had run away. When he returned home, his adoptive father was “crying his heart out because he loved me.” As a result, as far as running away was concerned, “I got blamed for that and made to feel guilty about it.” At age eleven, he was hospitalized for abdominal problems and had an infection, which he believes was caused by his brother’s sexual abuse. However, he reported, no one asked questions or looked into the causes. As a

result, the abuse continued for many years, whenever his parents were away and even when the family was together watching TV. This continued until his older brother was in his early twenties and the man giving testimony was in his preteen and early teen years.

As a child, the man giving informal testimony was very pious and devoted to being an altar boy and attended a Catholic school. He himself was not abused by a priest, but he reported witnessing sexual activity between religious individuals. This shook his faith and was a factor in his starting to steal money from the church, along with his sense of being trapped in abuse by his brother. At school, he would act out and be physically punished and discouraged from asking questions or speaking up. Again the resentment and his anger and hurt caused him to steal and to use drugs. He ended up on youth probation. He reported in his testimony that he told his probation officer about his abuse. He felt this resulted in “grooming” behaviour, very sympathetic, rubbing his shoulders, inappropriate touching, treating him to movies, and so on. The man giving informal testimony recalled trying to resist any sexual advances at this time.

As an older teen, drugs became more important—both dealing and manufacturing. As a result, he was briefly in jail and on probation. This time, he reported, he was abused and also taken to restaurants and given alcohol as part of “grooming” by persons in authority over him. Because of his involvement in drugs, and having only friends who were also involved in drugs, he felt there was nowhere to go to report anything. They were all vulnerable to authority. When he did speak to his father, the father spoke to his officer, but whatever was discussed led his father to say, “You should be ashamed of yourself. I’m not helping you anymore.” The man giving testimony describes this as “shattering,” as he saw his father and middle brother as “the closest friends I had at the time.” While his father was often absent working to support his family, the man recalls his adoptive father with fondness.

The man giving informal testimony believes his parole or probation was revoked due to his refusal to do sexual acts and therefore he ended up in a provincial corrections facility. Initially it was not too bad, but he was caught up in a riot. He was injured and ended up unconscious in the hospital facility. He reported that his injuries were consistent with sexual assault. He was given drugs and ultimately ended up in segregation in another facility. The cell was dark and there was a constant stream of low-level voices coming through the air vent and constant flushing from the toilet hole in the floor. In recalling this, the man indicated that he experienced sensory deprivation combined with “repeat commands or suggestions or instructions” to commit suicide. He reported being cold and poorly dressed, with no cot to sleep. Subsequently, he reported, physical restraint and intravenous drugs were administered, “psychological double-binds”

and electronic shock stimulus. He felt that it was like brainwashing or some sort of sexual aversion activity that he called “relentless”: “They completely destroyed me.” He reported that this led to constant thoughts of suicide that continue today.

After this experience, he returned to Cornwall. He was fearful and he stated that his past experience still haunts him, every day. He commented that he has been misdiagnosed with various conditions, but for him it feels as if “I am a billion atomic bombs going off all the time,” because it feels like the devastation that follows nuclear detonation.

For many years after, the man giving informal testimony reported, he tried to avoid being in trouble, did not wish to break the law, was “jail free” for years, and was working on a pardon. He describes himself as a “peace-loving man” who avoids those involved in crime. He had a common-law relationship of ten years and had two children in this relationship, as well as having a son from a previous relationship. He reported his abuse as a child to every authority he could think of, but this did not lead to any help; rather, he lost custody of his children and reported in his informal testimony that he was threatened with various negative consequences if he persisted in contacting authorities. This was hard, as he indicated that he was very careful about his children, fearing they could be abused and always taking care to ensure they were physically safe. He feels bitter that despite numerous reports, no steps were taken in respect to his abusers and the interventions of authorities only led to his estrangement from his own children, whom he loves very much. He worries that their lives are difficult, and hopes for better things for them but feels helpless to improve their welfare.

The man giving informal testimony discussed his involvement in some Phase 2 activities, which he found creative in terms of his development of innovative service and memorial ideas. However, he feels “obstructed” by those with greater power. And he recounted several recent futile incidents in which he was picked up by police and released late at night. He also indicated that he had experienced agoraphobic episodes lasting for weeks, in which he would not go out even to take out garbage or get food. He reported that his health condition has deteriorated, he has lost his housing, and he has been “banished from Cornwall.”

Currently, the man is living with a friend outside Cornwall under bail conditions. He is grateful to her and to others who care for him but feels constrained by the conditions and discouraged:

What I learned is that when you tell the truth, you get punished. You get punished for refusing to do illegal or immoral acts and get rewarded if you do ... But if you should say the truth and dare to come forward or dare to stand up for your rights ... you’re going to jail.

The man giving informal testimony said he wants “people to get educated, aware and roll up their sleeves and get to work” on some of the Phase 2 initiatives he champions—“We can make our world a better place.” He feels, however, that “institutions have not even come close to changing,” and he has “no faith in their ability to learn it,” which he thinks is evident by his recent circumstances and experiences, which include incarceration.

He feels betrayed that more has not been done. He says to those involved in Phase 2 activities, “Unless people on the bottom of the pyramid are included in solutions, there will be none.”

The individual giving testimony concluded by saying he felt hopeless and had no faith left:

I would rather be euthanized than live in an unjust society where lies or omission are reported as facts, and those giving medical treatment or law enforcement authorities ignore and minimize facts, leading to more trauma and repetition of past experiences. Reporting and giving help are flawed.

One of the positives in the man’s life has been artistic and musical endeavours. He is an accomplished painter and sculptor, and enjoyed working with plants and animals. Lyrics to two songs he wrote are included in the informal testimony volume.

## Lyrics: Pitter Patter

*(Remastered for Yoko Ono & family in honour of  
John Lennon's life: Hope & Love)*

In every way ...

It's here to stay ...

Sunshine today ...

Be here today ...

Yoko ... It's ok ... It's ok ... Sleep ... sleep ... sleep ... sleep

Pitter-patter, pitter-patter, pitter-patter on the street,

Doesn't matter, doesn't matter, doesn't matter, who you meet,

Wishy-washy, wishy-washy, wishy-washy, at the banks,

Pushy-shovey, pushy-shovey, pushy-shovey, in the ranks,

People tell me all the time,

About things that blow my mind,

It just seems like it's my weight,

Jesus tried to heal the blind,

People failed to draw the line,

Must've been something they just ate,

Fuzzy-wuzzy, fuzzy-wuzzy, fuzzy-wuzzy, was he even here?

Doesn't matter, doesn't matter, doesn't matter, never show your fear,

Ticky-tacky, ticky-tacky, ticky-tacky, see how they walk,

Wicky-wacky, wicky-wacky, wicky-wacky, hear how they balk,

People talk but all the while,

'bout politics of the frozen child,

That should never be born.

Into a cage and without you,

Like living in a crazy zoo,

We all slowly will be torn.

Chitter-chatter, chitter-chatter, chitter-chatter, on the lines,

Doesn't matter, doesn't matter, doesn't matter, it fries their minds,

Complications, complications, complications, fill their heads,

Helter-skelter, helter-skelter, helter-skelter, is their dread,

If the levee breaks what will you do?

When flood waters flow over you,

Will the tides of time carry you away?

People seem to be unaware,

No one seems to even care,

Surely we have all lost our way?

Busy-bodies, busy bodies, busy-bodies, in the undergrounds,  
Icky-ache, icky-ache, icky-ache, hands are brown,  
Pissie-pottie, pissie-pottie, pissie-pottie, this really stinks,  
Wishy-washy, wishy-washy, wishy-washy, down the sink,  
A time soon is to emerge,  
From love and life's eternal urge,  
Surely we can't afford to fall for the ruse,  
Some thinkers think that we should agree,  
To bring about this fantasy,  
Tell me which of them do we use?  
Teacher's pet or village fool,  
That's what we all learned in school,  
Forgetting how and why we should forgive,  
Maybe this time is the best?  
To try to find some happiness,  
Try to let go of what we give.

## “The North Star”\*

A woman was welcomed to informal testimony, coming with her counsellor. The woman recounted a history of sexual abuse at the hands of her father from the time she was nine years old until her early twenties, and also sexual abuse by her landlord from age eleven to fifteen. As well, she reported violent physical abuse and serious verbal abuse perpetrated by her mother. She stated that her mother knew of the sexual abuse by her father and did nothing to either stop or report it. An aunt also knew of the abuse but never did anything about it, stating that it was “family business.”

She reported her father to the authorities several years ago and he was charged with and convicted of sexual abuse and was sentenced to a period of incarceration. However, she indicated that members of her family have not been supportive of her decision to report her father and that she no longer has a close relationship with them, which has been difficult for her.

Throughout her childhood and teenage years, the woman stated, she did not trust anyone and she felt very negative about herself. She mastered the “art of control” so that no one would find out what was happening to her. She spent a lot of time hiding from her father, staying out of his way, because if he saw her, she knew, more abuse would follow. She recalled that her siblings were jealous of her, due to the increased attention from their father. But, as she stated, “they have nothing to be jealous of.”

The woman recalled one incident from her childhood where she and her siblings were taken from the family home as a result of a physical altercation between her parents. She recalled staying with her grandparents for several days. However, she reported, she and all the other children were later returned to the family home without any further investigation of the home situation, which was chaotic and where the parents fought constantly and drank excessively. This situation reoccurred regularly, making the children feel abandoned by the very institutions that should have protected them. In addition, there was a lack of consistent care for the children and a lack of services such as counselling for the parents and children that could have improved the home situation or helped the children to deal with the trauma they experienced.

She also recalled attempting to run away from home to avoid abuse, but she lived in the country and there were frightening wolves in the area, and the distances involved made her very isolated. This meant that in either staying or going, she could be preyed upon.

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\* “The North Star” was the title chosen by the woman giving testimony. The North Star is the guiding star; it is the star to steer by, the “true north.”

Only in visiting her godparents, on her father's side of the family, did she have a good and safe environment: "I was truly free. I was a child."

As a child and young adolescent, she felt that too many adults "stood by" and did not report what they had seen. For example, she reported, people in authority in schools and the Church were aware of incidents of neglect or physical abuse but did not intervene.

Prior to reporting her father to the authorities, she stated, she had a difficult time coping. She would spend a lot of time driving around aimlessly and sleeping in her vehicle. The woman giving informal testimony indicated that police authorities would follow her everywhere when she was driving, perhaps in concern, but it felt like being chased by her abusive father and was frightening and frustrating. She was suicidal, and being followed amplified the suicidal ideation. Eventually, she was assessed by a psychiatrist, to whom she disclosed, for the first time, that she had been abused. She reported that she was using the same coping mechanisms that she had used as a child, by trying to hide from the world. She did not feel as though she existed as a human being in her own right, realizing, "It's like I didn't exist but I did for the sole pleasure of someone else and not myself, for the consumption of someone else."

The woman recounted the inner struggle and turmoil she experienced as a result of the abuse and how it impacted her life. She described it as seeing the world differently than others, and that as a result she acted differently, which helped her to cope. However, those actions were interpreted by outsiders, mainly police, as "bizarre" and "weird." She explained that they did not understand what was going on inside of her, that there was a child there "screaming for help." Eventually, when she met with a psychiatrist, she was able to give a voice to the child within her and to disclose the abuse she had suffered. She described her disclosure as a "liberating" experience but also "a shredding of the soul." In talking about herself now, she stated:

Now, when she speaks, she speaks with clarity, with wisdom, with courage to extract as much justice, not for her, for her followers, for the ones that she is carving a path for, for her children and her future generations and of others around her.

She described herself as "a victim to a survivor and a victor who doesn't tolerate this any more."

The woman giving informal testimony indicated that her father was convicted of abusing her and sentenced to a custodial term. The case was "written up" in a newspaper without identifying her, and this report was read by her youngest daughter. Her youngest found it hard to understand how such terrible abuse

was allowed to go on for so long without anyone apparently noticing it or stopping it.

She has been in counselling for several years and has a good relationship with her counsellor. She has a responsible government position that she loves, although it is very stressful and demanding. She is also engaged in teaching others in a volunteer capacity and helping them to see things from a survivor's perspective. Because she is successful and well dressed, she feels people do not always understand she is a survivor—they have negative stereotypes about survivors and about those diagnosed with mental illness.

She reported having difficulties in her marriage and separating from her husband because he had physically abused her children. In her view, she married "her father and her mother all rolled up into one person." However, she is proud of the job she has done with her own children, and that she tried to give them the happy times as children that she had lacked.

One of the biggest problems with respect to childhood sexual abuse, she reported, is the secrecy aspect and the fact that children are trained to keep the abuse as secret and to guard that secret with their lives. Indeed, "keeping the secret may be a survival mechanism." She herself kept the abuse secret—from everyone—for thirty-three years.

She also sees problems in the way professionals interact with those who have suffered from abuse. In her view, more sensitivity training is needed for these professionals so that they understand why survivors may respond differently than others. In particular, she feels that police officers, who are often called upon in these situations, should have access to better education and training to deal appropriately with people with mental illness.

She would like to see society care for children more, from the beginning of their lives, and to watch for the signs of abuse. She suggested that professionals, such as doctors or others who are properly trained, look out for both physical and emotional signs of abuse in children throughout their lives, starting at a young age. She believes that this kind of monitoring should be mandatory. In her view, parents should also be monitored and counselled if necessary, so that they will have the proper tools to become good parents. She emphasized that everyone—children and adults—should be educated to be compassionate and loving and to respect themselves as well as others.

The woman giving informal testimony reported that her eldest daughter has started a Facebook group on the Internet where today there are up to seventy people who can openly discuss and inquire about physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The woman sees this as a positive outcome and that it provides hope for the future.

To assist those going through the court process, she suggests that survivors who testify in court be allowed to bring a “teddy bear” with them to the stand, as something to hold on to, something that can act as their voice and their strength no matter how hard the court process may be.

The woman giving informal testimony wants to ensure that people with mental illness not be taken to correctional facilities or detention centres where their health may in fact deteriorate but be held in facilities where they can get compassionate treatment. A secure setting may be needed, but it should be oriented to helping the individual and not punishing them.

Those receiving the informal testimony praised the woman’s resilience and her success as a parent and professional. They all agreed she had a “unique and strong spirit.”

While the journey the woman giving testimony described was most difficult, she stated that now “I am my own person. I am my own boss … Now, I know really who I am.” The woman indicated that she wanted to thank her godparents, her counsellors, her friends, and some police officers who helped and supported her in her healing journey.

## “A Long Way”

A man was welcomed to informal testimony, bringing his counsellor. He recounted being sexually abused by a member of the clergy in his early teen years. He reported that he was abused over a period of time and that the clergy member actively pursued an ongoing relationship with him, including coming to visit the man while he was visiting his grandparents in another city. The abuse started with sexual questions being asked in confession and subsequent requests for private meetings. He reported that the abuse escalated over time, beginning with the clergy member masturbating himself, to the point where the clergy member was having physical contact with the man giving testimony, who was a teen at the time.

As a boy, the man indicated, he did not report the abuse at the time it occurred. He stated that at that time the belief at school was that kids could not go to the police without “getting into trouble.” In addition, he reasoned at the time that the police would report the matter to his parents and then the information would become public and known by his friends. He also felt he could not disclose the abuse to his parents, as they would have believed the clergy member over him and that he would have been disciplined for “lying about a priest.”

The man giving informal testimony did later report the abuse to a new clergy member; however, he stated, nothing was done as a result of his disclosure. The new clergy member simply told the man to tell the other clergy member to stop the abuse. He recalled being very unhappy with this response. He had wanted someone to confront his abuser and to be “on his side” or go to report to a higher authority, but instead his disclosure was ignored and pushed aside. He feels that had he been believed and supported when he disclosed, his life would have turned out differently. For example, he might have completed his education and could have had fewer financial struggles in his life.

One of the ways the man coped with the abuse was to lose himself in his studies at school. He recalled spending many hours memorizing books. The memorization routine also helped him to be able to fall asleep. His study habits were also a way of avoiding contact with his abuser. He would often use studying as an excuse for not helping out at the church. While he reported that his grades at school did initially improve, his study habits ended up burning him out. He did not end up finishing grade 13 due to being burnt out. As well, at school, although he found the girls attractive, he rarely dated, fearing the girls could “see in his eyes” what had happened.

The man giving informal testimony reported that he had a problem with alcohol for many years but that he subsequently quit drinking. He has had problems with sleeping for many years and continues to take sleeping medications nightly. He associates his issues with both alcohol and sleeping with the anxiety stemming

from his experience of abuse and denial; the denial continues to affect him and others like him, such as his brother: “We don’t like to be called liars; I am here to tell you these things happened.”

The man reported that he has had problems with his relationships as a result of the abuse. He and his partner have been separated for two years, although they continue to work on their relationship and he has hopes for the future. He did not tell her of his abuse until recently, and he stated in his informal testimony that the disclosure is part of the reason they separated and that “I still didn’t tell her the whole story.”

When his sons were young and wanted to be altar boys, the man reported, he was very protective of them and worried about the potential for abuse. Being altar boys raised “red flags” for him. He stated that his sons would get angry at him for asking so many questions after they returned home from the church. They thought he was being nosy, when he was really only looking for signs of abuse. At the time, his sons did not know about the abuse. The man giving testimony has only recently told them and reported that they have been very supportive and wondered why he did not disclose the abuse sooner.

The abuse also affected this man’s relationship with the Church in a negative manner. Prior to the abuse, he had been very active in the Church, and some thought that he might have eventually joined the clergy himself. While he still has spiritual beliefs, he has lost faith in the role of the Church and its hierarchy and is no longer an active churchgoer. He thinks that there should be more safeguards involving young people in confession. If that had happened for him, “I wouldn’t be in this. I wouldn’t have been in this situation.”

The man giving testimony kept his abuse a secret for many years. About five years ago, he opened up to his brother about the abuse, when the brother asked him about his experiences as a young man. His brother was also a victim of abuse by a priest. He stated that he felt a lot of relief in sharing his story with his brother, as before that time it had just been kept inside and the pressure had been building up. Together with some others, they started a group for men who had been abused, and provided support to one another. He stated:

A lot of time we had meetings which were fun only because ... we didn’t have to hide that we were victims. We knew we were victims. It’s a safe place to go to and that’s what made it nice.

He has been active in getting counselling and credits his counsellors for helping him to continue to manage his life successfully. He considers counselling as integral to the healing process and hopes that counselling for abuse survivors continues for as long as they need it. He wishes that he had access to counselling

earlier, stating that he may have been able to disclose and address the impact of his abuse sooner.

This man feels that he is “moving on” and thinks that it is good that the Inquiry has brought these issues out into the open. He stated, “It’s in the open. People have to talk about it. As long as you’re talking about it, somewhere down the road somebody is going to pick up on this and go with the ball.” On the other hand, he does feel that the Inquiry testimony experience “revictimized” some individuals and had long-term negative impacts for them.

One of the changes that this man would like to see is for people who have been abused to have a place to go to get help and referrals for services, and to be believed. He also feels that education is integral and that people need to know that there is a place to go to get help if they have been abused. He expressed concern that recommendations need to be acted on and enforced—and they need to address adult survivors, not only children. If he could speak to young people, he would say:

Don’t get into a situation where you are in a tricky place with an adult  
... Never allow yourself to be alone ... If someone touches you in the  
wrong place, confront them immediately, but make sure that there is  
someone else to back you.

The group receiving testimony indicated they were honoured to receive this testimony and wanted to recognize the humour and wisdom shown by the man testifying.

In conclusion, the man giving testimony urged everyone to “weigh everything down to the last and truly believe me when I say most people who have come forward have told the truth.” He feels it would be healing for people like him if institutional heads acknowledge the past and “change their way of thinking properly towards victims. This will go a long way.”

## “It’s Taken a Toll”

A man came forward as a person having senior responsibilities in an institution in the Cornwall area. He recounted how he had grown up in the Cornwall area but had gone away to university and for the initial period of his career. While working elsewhere, he had met his life partner and was married.

He was asked to return to Cornwall to take on more significant responsibilities in his field of work. He persuaded his wife to relocate to the Ottawa Valley area. His wife went on to establish her own successful business, while he worked in Cornwall, achieving significant promotions.

In terms of his own life, at a young age, he recalled, he really had to take on a man’s responsibilities, as his father was an alcoholic and was “a weak man.” He feels that he overcame the difficulties inherent in this situation, although it was hard to overcome all of the impacts on his life. He remained close to his mother and proud of the war record of other men in his extended family. He chose to honour and follow their example.

The man indicated that he was a supporter of Phase 2, seeing it as “well conceived and undertaken,” but felt that Phase 1 was “challenging” for all involved. He noted that the length of the investigation and hearings “speaks volumes on how complex an issue or series of issues this has been.” While sympathetic to the recent challenges and circumstances for the staff of the Inquiry, which he sees as similar to his own experiences, he thinks that it is important for people to understand the hardships many professionals have endured for many years in the Cornwall area.

As context, he noted that issues of current and historical sexual abuse arise everywhere. However, he acknowledged, the circumstances in Cornwall had some special or particular aspects related to those taking part in the process of responding to abuse allegations being subsequently accused of abuse or being involved in some personal/family or professional way. The fact that certain English and French names are common in the area added to confusion and, in his view, fuelled “conspiracy theorists.”

The man giving informal testimony recounted that the result for him and others was a reduction in collegiality among community professionals. Some professionals involved, including him, found people “distancing themselves,” even people who were old school friends. He reported that some of his younger colleagues just “could not take the environment any more” and relocated. He found himself trying to support others as best he could, but feeling first angry and then disappointed at the continuing lack of senior support and the environment of community suspicion. He did want to acknowledge support from many colleagues who stood up for him and from family, but the years were very hard. At one period, he found he withdrew and felt “emotionally on edge,” but he “put

things in perspective through the objective insight from friends, spouse and colleagues.” It was a “tough break,” but he is now “moving along.” He is proud that, despite all this, he and his colleagues responded “with professional integrity and responsibility” and did their jobs in a jurisdiction with one of Canada’s highest per capita murder rates, smuggling issues, organized crime, and social and financial issues that are reflected in youth court and criminal court. His “take home” message is that “folks through all of that have to be given credit for withstanding the perfect storm.” He points to the symbolic importance of senior support, including the visits of senior politicians to meet younger staff, particularly in a small centre. He hopes this can happen in future.

In looking back at his career, the man giving informal testimony could remember helping bring those who had sexually abused children and young people to justice. He recalled, in particular, a young girl who had been stoic in bringing forward her complaint but who broke down with tears of relief when it was clear her stepfather was to be convicted for her abuse. He felt positive about being part of that. But, sadly, he also commented that he has noted over time that the young woman is continuing to struggle in life financially, is in poor relationships, and has involvement in petty crime. He has seen this with many individuals who have been abused as kids, and he feels pity for them, seeing that they “have nothing in their lives—never did.” They lack the things that in his life have kept him going and given his life purpose: “a capable mom, a supportive wife and amazing kids, good friends, healthy hobbies, worthwhile work that he loves, loyal and supportive colleagues.”

In terms of the ongoing effect, he feels that significant scrutiny and suspicion remains, as does persistence in certain beliefs, irrespective of information to the contrary. He also reported that this sometimes occurs in the media as well. When he is making efforts to be diligent and professional, and refusing to “run away,” he reported, it is hurtful to have this constant “backdrop”—“it’s taken a toll.” He hopes Phase 2 can recognize that there have been effects on the administration of justice locally. He also thinks that there are “lessons to be learned,” such as communicating early and clearly to dispel rumours that crop up. The traditional response of silence was misunderstood—the public may have been “poorly served” by this. He also commented:

I’ll just say one more piece to add to that, the problem of loss of confidence by the community. We’re living in a society in North America, maybe the Western world, not just Ontario or SD&G [Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry], where there’s a loss of respect for authority. There’s a loss of respect and trust in government.

Young people are standing up in court now and mouthing off to judges. Parents are giving up on—not all parents, but we see parents giving up on raising children and disciplining children at age 12, and saying ... when a child is involved their first assault or shoplift, saying, “I can’t handle him. You deal with him. You deal with her.”

He comments that other non-governmental institutions, such as most Christian denominations, “have been shaken too.”

A discussion ensued regarding being a prominent professional in a small centre—being under more personal scrutiny than in a large centre, and having that extend to family. Sometimes false rumours get around quickly, based on misheard matters. For example, the man giving informal testimony recounted, once his mother was shocked to get a condolence call arising from a false report of his suicide; another time, a colleague was told falsely of his arrest. He has had his car damaged deliberately, and his niece who lives in Cornwall found false information about him on the Internet.

The man giving informal testimony recommends to others and tries himself to keep “healthy professional lines of communication,” to concentrate on the work that he is “hard-wired” to do and sees as honourable and needed. He is also pleased to see positive change over time in reaching victims of abuse “at a human level” and in bringing in people with the skills and disposition to take time to recognize and respond to the needs of victims in the justice system. He noted that although hard decisions do have to be made, he “always presumes every victim is telling the truth.” As a result, he says of the system of justice, despite issues that arise, “I have faith, and I have always had it.” He indicated that he thinks some of the Phase 2 initiatives, if implemented, could really help, and urges people not to get discouraged about prospects for healing and reconciliation. He does think that the community “is in a lot better shape than it was in 1996 and 1997,” and he intends to get personally involved, for example, in training sessions, to be “seen as part of the solution.” He does want people to understand the hardship that professionals have experienced: “Those are all things that affected them at a professional and personal level.” He views this as also part of the work of healing and reconciliation.

Those hearing the informal testimony agreed that it was important to hear from the man providing the perspective of a professional in the community. They were honoured to have the opportunity to hear from him and expressed hope for his continuing well-being.

## “Never the Same”

The man was welcomed to informal testimony. He had brought his wife as a support in discussing his journey.

The man giving informal testimony was the sixth child of seventeen. He recalled that there was not a lot of love and kindness in the home; his father worked, and his mother was too busy with all the children for him to receive much attention. His mother was not happy to have given birth to him and let him know this often. She was physically abusive, and the children were often frightened and neglected.

The man giving testimony reported that the priest in his local community called his mother and asked if he could help around the church. The man was only a child of seven at the time. Going to “help out” meant getting attention and making some spending money. His mother sent him to help the priest clean up around the rectory and weed the garden. When he was finished, the priest gave him a big hug and “gave him the attention he craved and was missing at home.” At first, the situation was positive, as the priest “groomed him” to gain his trust.

The man testifying reported that the priest asked him to come down to the basement. When they were down in the isolated place, the priest forcibly sexually abused him. He went home and hid his bloodied shorts. He thinks his mother found them but said nothing. After that, when his mother sent him to help the priest, instead he would take off with his friends and disappear for the day.

The man giving testimony indicated that he felt that from that experience on, “he was never the same.” He had trouble in school, and could no longer concentrate. His education never went past the grade 2 level. He ended up in trouble with the law and eventually became a “drunk,” using alcohol to respond to his pain. When he was drunk, he would hear his mother’s words that “she wished she had never had him.” And he had flashbacks to the abuse by the clergyman.

The man giving testimony reported that he ended up involved in petty crimes and was “known to bikers.” He mentioned that he even had a relative in organized crime. He calls his crimes “reckless” and as a result of drinking, as opposed to his having a criminal intent or attitude. He expressed pride in never having lost a job over his drinking, even when he deliberately drank in front of his bosses: “They knew if they gave me a job to do, it would be done correctly.” Despite “run-ins” as a young man with petty crime, he was always a good worker and was always able to maintain work around Ontario in construction. His work contributions are a source of pride to him.

After a great effort, the man testifying got sober through Alcoholics Anonymous. He had quit drinking when he was rear-ended by a drunk driver

who happened to be a person of authority in the community. The driver got out of his car and checked to see if the man was injured. The man giving testimony responded that he “did not know” if he was all right, but the drunk said he appeared to be okay and drove off. The man giving testimony called the police, but the man who hit him was never charged. To this day, he reports, his back is “not right.”

The man giving testimony has sued the drunk driver. He reported in his informal testimony that he is not satisfied with what has happened or with the lack of consequences for this man who drank, injured him, and just drove off. The man was given a “dressing down” by a judge, but nothing else.

Recently he and his second wife lost a daughter in a car accident. This terrible loss caused him to have a nervous breakdown, but he slowly came out of this. He credits his current wife with having the strength to get them both through it.

The man reported that he has had a total of five children with two wives and another woman. His current wife is his strength and has encouraged him to go back and increase his education, and has helped him in many other ways in his life. As a result, his life has improved.

His relationship with his children is strained because of his history of drinking and broken relationships with their mothers, and there is a history of violence in adult relationships. But he also feels, in particular, that his youngest daughter takes emotional advantage of his wife: “She often uses her.” He does know that his daughter is very angry with him because he has shown no love over the years—“No hugs or anything like it.” He believes this lack of ability to show affection relates directly to his encounter with the priest as a child, in which signs of affection were used to abuse. And, as well, he is volunteering with handicapped children, and the daughter is jealous of his ability to be with them and not with her. As a result, the impact of his abuse as a child has reached into the next generation.

The man was praised for his courage in coming forward and taking steps to change his life in a positive way and deal with the impacts of abuse on his family. His wife was thanked for her obvious care and support.

## “Wise Beyond Her Years”

A young Cornwall woman of only nineteen came with several supporters and family members to give informal testimony. The session opened with a prayer, parts of which are set out here:

### OPENING PRAYER

*We thank you, Creator, for this day. We thank you for the circle that we're having and ask, Creator, to guide us through this circle for all the things that we need to say, for all the things we don't want to carry any more. Help us to remember, Creator, to listen to each other and to respect what each person says and to share the things we're about to hear, the things that we need to say, and to reach the start of another journey.*

*So we ask you, Creator, to guide [the woman giving testimony] through her journey after the day's end today, to follow this journey that she needs to follow in the special way young people are supposed to be: with a lot of hopes in the heart and to be happy.*

The woman giving informal testimony recounted several incidents of sexual abuse in her childhood. When she was a child, she was sexually abused by a cousin over a prolonged period of time. Later, as a teenager, she was sexually assaulted by a man while she was babysitting. Despite her difficult past, she demonstrated incredible resilience and confidence in her capacity to take on the issues in her life.

The woman testifying reported that she was generally treated well by those in authority, when, as a child, she disclosed that she had been abused by her cousin. She received treatment, which she found to be helpful, and has continued in counselling to the present time. She also valued her best friend's support at the time, and this girl continues to be close to her.

Continuing in telling of her journey, the young woman explained that she went to court as a result of charges laid against her cousin. During the process, she felt that it was hard to tell her very personal story over and over again to different people who were strangers to her. She was also uncomfortable with the level of detail that she had to report, such as using the anatomically correct words for body parts. And she would have found a quiet room that was more homelike to be a better place to talk to authorities.

After the disclosure of the abuse by her cousin as a preteen, the woman stated that she was no longer able to see him or talk to him. She was upset about this,

as the two had been close and she felt that he was like a brother to her. She began to act out in a negative manner. She started meeting men through the Internet, becoming involved with boys, and smoking, and began running away from home—"doing a lot of dangerous stuff that 13- and 14-year-olds shouldn't do."

One of the ways in which the abuse affected her was in becoming more sexual with boys at a relatively young age. She did not understand that the sexual abuse she suffered was a negative type of attention, and therefore she sought out sexual attention from her peers. She thought that it was normal to seek this kind of attention and that it was necessary in order to have friends and so that people would like her.

The second incident of abuse happened when she was a teenager. She was babysitting at the time, and an adult friend of the mother of the children sexually assaulted her. During the assault, she told him to stop, but he refused. She eventually got away from him and locked herself in a bathroom. She called her parents and her father came to pick her up. They immediately went to the police station to report the incident.

When reporting the incident, she felt that the police were not equipped to deal with the issue properly. She also reported that they were not particularly understanding with respect to her triggers. Her assailant was convicted but had a sentence of only a few months.

After the assault, the young woman was fearful for her safety. She had heard that the perpetrator was a dangerous person and measures had to be undertaken to ensure her safety at school. And she was unable to babysit the children she was babysitting at the home where the assault occurred. She regrets this, because she "loves them to death."

To this day, she reported, she has a strong aversion to having doctors touch her, which she attributes to her history of abuse. She insists on having a friend or family member in the examining room to hold her hand and reassure her and to help her feel safe throughout the procedure or examination.

Despite her past experiences, she reported, her life is quite good at the present time and that she feels strong. She stated:

I'm really doing good now. I'm with someone that loves me. I have great parents; my sister and I get along. I've made some mistakes along the way; I'm still making mistakes but I have people to back me up with that and they're not big mistakes any more, they're just little ones, like forgetting French fries in the oven for too long.

She credits her strength and resilience at least in part to her family, who have been unfailingly supportive throughout her life. They have also been strong

advocates for her when necessary. She states that she is also able to trust others. She gives them the benefit of the doubt. This is a change from when she was younger, when she found it very difficult to trust.

At the time she disclosed the abuse, she regretted telling others about it, as she wished she did not have to go through the processes in the justice system. Looking back on it now, however, she is glad that she disclosed the abuse. She stated that her disclosure has stopped others from being abused by the same perpetrators. She recounted a story of how she gave a speech at her school about her abuse and about how she hoped that it would help those who may have been abused to come forward or to help parents and others recognize the signs of abuse in children.

She would like to see education about abuse start young, and teachers become more aware of the signs of abuse and of the differences that can exist between boys and girls who have experienced abuse. She thinks self-defence courses at school would help. She would also like to see people treat each other in a more friendly manner, not to be bureaucratic or legalistic. Despite her experiences, she expressed a great deal of compassion toward the perpetrators of abuse. She stated that those who have perpetrated need to have counselling as well, and that prison is not the answer to child sexual abuse: “Just putting them in jail and leaving them be isn’t going to help no one and it’s just going to make things worse when they get out.”

The group also discussed the need for family support—husbands and fathers often carry a burden and have little community support. As well, they often do not have access to affordable counselling or time off work to go to court to support family members.

All those present at the testimony commended the young woman for her courage and her strength for moving past such difficult experiences: “You are wise beyond your years.” Her parents expressed pride and love.

An Aboriginal Grandmother concluded the session with a moving prayer:

*We thank you Creator for this time. We thank you for this occasion that we have to get to be together; to air out a lot of things and for us to put down everything that we shared here today and just to let it go and for this family to start a new journey.*

*In our healing journey, we die a thousand deaths, and this is one of them. We’re going to be starting another journey tomorrow in another way, a brand new one, whatever that will be—wherever that will go.*

*I know it’s going to be a better one than what you’re going to leave behind.*

*So let us thank the Creator for all the gifts that he gives us; all the help that we get from the medicine given us ... Let us have support for one another no matter where we are. Sometimes it's only just by picking up the telephone and saying "Hello, can we talk for a while" and away we go.*

*So we are glad—I am glad to be here today. I'm honoured to be here today for all the things that happened here today, and we thank the Creator for all the good things that are going to come because of this.*

## “Spirit of the Maple Tree Woman”\*

A circle gathered to hear the testimony of a Cornwall woman. The session opened with a beautiful prayer by a supporting Aboriginal Grandmother and with a smudging ceremony. All in the circle expressed their sense of honour in being included and in being part of an important milestone in the woman’s life journey.

The woman giving informal testimony was born to a mother who already had two toddlers. She believes her mother had post-partum depression; the mother rejected her daughter “for not being a boy,” leaving her at the hospital. The woman’s grandmother brought the little baby home, insisting the mother care for it. However, the woman giving testimony recalled that the grandmother did not think her mother capable of it. The woman’s earliest memories involve the day her father left the family. As a two-year-old, she was thrown against the wall. Thereafter, her mother blamed her for her father’s departure, and she did not see her father until she was about fifteen, when she went to look for her “fantasy father.” She moved in with her father, but she recalls that she was first physically abused, then he invaded her privacy in the bath and ultimately sexually abused her. She was ashamed to tell her mother she had made a mistake, so she put up with it for about eight months and then returned home to her mother to “tough it out.”

Her mother was verbally abusive all through her life; the woman recalled being referred to as the “son-of-a-bitch kid” and being told she was unwanted. She recalled that she was regularly beaten—more than her more compliant siblings: “I was pretty feisty and nobody was the boss of me, and that’s what got me in trouble.” However, as a child she suppressed memories of her beatings, to the point that as an adult, she was surprised to discover evidence of broken ribs and scars. She found that “when I got that memory, I actually suffered the pain of broken ribs.” If she cried, she would trigger the physical flashback to these childhood beatings.

When the woman giving testimony was about age four, her mother met a man she would marry. She reported that her mother hid the woman giving testimony at the woman’s grandmother’s for six months so the man would not know of the family’s true size. The woman giving testimony found the time at her grandmother’s house was pleasant—except for worrying that Santa Claus might not know of her whereabouts. She recalls her grandmother as kind, but if any

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\* Subsequent to her testimony, the woman giving testimony received her adult spirit name in a special ceremony: Spirit of the Maple Tree Woman. This is a symbol of leadership, capacity to change (as with the seasons), and the sweetness of womanhood (the syrup). She feels the process has helped her leave her painful past behind and go forward. It is also an example of how “they cannot kill your spirit.”

kindness or recognition of good marks was shown to the woman, her mother would say, "She'd be goddamned if I was going to be smarter" than her brothers and sisters, or similar hurtful words. She felt her mother did not want her to succeed or have a good life and resented the kindness shown to her by anyone else, particularly by the grandmother.

At age five, the woman recalled, she was sexually abused by a cousin and experienced great pain. Her attempts to tell her mother were met with harsh words. By the time she was twelve, she reported, there were seven different men: "I just remember thinking that it was normal, that I had some kind of sign on me." She reported that she suppressed memories of the abuse until her mid-teens through disassociation, but she had tried to commit suicide, just knowing "something was wrong." At age eighteen, she met the man who would be her husband and was willing to have an intimate relationship, but the pain was too great. She had to have corrective surgery because of the childhood sexual abuse. She worried about what she would tell her fiancé, but "he did love me and it didn't matter."

She recalled:

When I grew up, I knew the way I wanted to be and I had a powerful vision of what I wanted in my life: I was going to get married and have my first baby when I was 25. So I got married when I was 23, had my first baby when I was 24. So we did it, and I knew that I could and do have a good life, despite the odds.

She recalled that having a child was "a love like no other." But she recalled that her oldest child did not respond to the usual behaviour modification techniques, which did not work, and it was a constant struggle to raise a child with "Explosive Child Syndrome." Her second child was "textbook," but the woman went to many specialists with her eldest, seeking help.

She reported that one of the specialists suggested that the problem was her mothering skills, as a result of her difficult childhood. After grooming her to believe in his authority, the therapist told her he really cared and "he wanted to teach her how to make love—and you're lucky because not all therapists would do that." She continued to resist, but he told her that her marriage would not survive and that if she did not comply, "there's the door." She then made an appointment for the "lesson," but on the day, indicated, "I can't do this!" The therapist calmed her by offering water, which she reported was drugged, paralyzing her. The man sexually assaulted her; her baby was in the room, crying. The woman still worries: "To this day, I don't know what that did to her."

She was afraid to say anything, and the abuse continued, including what she described as sexual torture. She felt terrible guilt and then relief when she found

that her therapist was losing his job and leaving town. But it took her time to realize he was abusive and that the conduct was unprofessional. She did sue but was dissatisfied with the amount received and with the “gag” order, because the “gag order” was an additional heavy burden to carry and made the feelings of carrying “a terrible secret” much worse. She and her husband felt “worn down” by the process, so gave in for less than she thought right.

After her abusive therapist left, the woman giving testimony said she was able to get better help on parenting her daughter—she learned a “different kind of mothering.”

In her thirties, she decided to hold her cousin accountable for his abuse of her as a child. She recalled, “My family went ballistic” and her siblings would not join her. It was hard, but she says:

It did help a lot actually. It was phenomenal because I got so much more than I expected. The biggest thing I got was my cousin crying and looking at me and saying, “I had no idea what I did to you. I didn’t know I did that to you.” And it’s not so much that I have to forgive him—I think he needs to forgive himself.

In the middle of this procedure for her historical sexual abuse, the police called her to say that her twelve-year-old had been sexually assaulted and child welfare authorities brought in. She was shocked but unable to get information; she was told, “You’ll have to talk to a protection worker.” In the end, she had to wait three days to find out what had happened. It turned out to be a nephew, who had also been abused as a child, who had abused her daughter over several years.

At age eight, she recalled, her daughter was normal weight, but at age twelve was obese: “So for two years, she ate her secret.” Again, the woman giving testimony reported her family responded with hostility: “Why did she open her mouth?” They did not understand the role of the CAS and the police in proceeding with charges but thought this was somehow the woman giving testimony “pressing charges.” The woman said:

My grandmother never said anything. My mother never said anything. I said something and then it goes to the next generation and this generation wants my daughter—their cousin—to be quiet as well. But we want to say that if the truth does not come out, the healing cannot start and the abuse will not stop.

She feels that her family did not realize how hard it was to proceed, as she genuinely cared for the nephew, who had spent a great deal of time at her home

due to his own mother's illness because of his mother's difficult childhood. In the end, her nephew did tell the truth, pled guilty, got counselling and a trade, and "hopefully he'll never touch another child." She also hopes this could break a cycle of male abuse in her family.

The woman indicated that she sees her daughter as a "warrior": "I don't know if adults could go through with what she went through and still be who she is." One recollection of the period that still troubles her is that she was asked by a person in authority whether it was possible that her daughter's report of abuse was a bid for attention, seeing the attention her mother's case had garnered. The woman giving testimony found that comment hurtful and insensitive to both her and her daughter.

After this difficult period, the woman giving testimony "went to a women's gathering and found out how to feed my spirit ... I found my way home." This has helped her heal and has given her a way to balance her life emotionally, physically, and spiritually: "This really helped: to honour me as a woman, to be proud to be a woman and not to be ashamed of being a woman and to 'restore the feminine sexual spirit.' Which is what the sexual abuse took from me." She found that her natural ways of coping—going to nature in her mind, for example, was a reflection of her "native spirit." She found that the teachings and support and the interaction with other women moved her on a healing journey and gave her the tools for "a good life and to walk in balance."

While she was starting this healing process, her daughter, now age fifteen, reported that a man had tried to sexually assault her. Because of her previous experience, her daughter had received counselling that helped her protect herself from assault, "and she remembered what they told her and she got herself out." This time, the woman giving testimony knew what her daughter's rights were and insisted on a trained sexual assault officer, who was excellent, and on a counsellor. She stressed how proud she was of her daughter's strength in proceeding to testify against a man with a long history of assaults and other criminal charges, when others had been too afraid to go to court. She says:

So in some ways it breaks my heart but, in other ways, I've got to be proud because I gave birth to a warrior, and it's not easy to be the mother of a warrior because you have to watch her fight and to see her pick up her medicine and I don't think any mother should have to go through that.

In the processes, she felt the "Creator had a plan." It included her husband taking back his place as a protector of his child by being next to his daughter in court. After, she recognized that because of her own history, she enabled

her daughter “to have not-my-fault syndrome.” So the woman asked “the Creator to give her power back.” This happened in the court process, where her daughter stood up to her assailant. And the woman giving testimony had to learn that:

... it wasn't about which therapist was going to fix her, it was about her daughter getting ready to fix herself. And that's the most brutal thing as a mother, that there's nothing you can do and you can only pray your child will want to heal and to leave behind being a victim.

The woman giving testimony has not been satisfied with the Cornwall Public Inquiry and felt she should have testified in Phase 1. But she was very pleased and excited to be approved for counselling and for her costs to travel to a healing centre in Ottawa, through the Counselling Support program. She feels she has moved forward and has learned patience and to accept her innate leadership characteristics. She has a positive relationship with her counsellor and has “literally had to learn how to be happy and to stay in my body when I was happy.” This has been something she works on in counselling.

Recently the woman has had serious physical illness and over fifteen operations. She feels that her anger and frustration from her abuse have resulted in physical manifestations such as a throat obstruction and kidney stones, and have delayed her ability to make progress in counselling. But at the same time, she said, “I thought I could never be this content in life,” and she reflects on current feelings of satisfaction in life. This is in part that she has connected with people who care for her and “grandmother her,” reproducing some of the happy memories she has of her own grandmother. And her counsellor helps her to improve her stability and responses to stress, including stress of illness. Having made so much progress, she worries:

Time is ticking for the Public Inquiry. And they're going to leave town pretty soon and the funding is going to leave with them. And I got to hurry up and heal before we lose the funding. So there's so much pressure to heal with this time frame of funding. Nobody should have that kind of pressure ... There should be no barriers to healing ... If I became a crack addict, there's all kind of money to help me. Someone did this to me and I have to walk the journey to heal and financially I may not be able to. I worry every day that counselling will not be available in future and this inhibits the process of recovery, in particular for the family as a whole.

One suggestion the woman gave for the future was creating a couples support group. The husbands of women who were abused could benefit from talking to other men; this could also help men whose children are abused. There should be support for men whose wives were abused—they also carry burdens because of the expectation that men will protect women and girls. When this does not happen, men “have a loss of confidence in their role as men.”

The woman giving informal testimony looks forward with hope, and with a “warrior spirit.” She feels she will no longer carry the burden of others’ wrongdoings. She felt grateful for the process of informal testimony: “I’m glad that I was listened to,” that she was told, “Let her speak.” This was very uplifting for her—a “breakthrough.”

All the members of the circle accepted the passed feather, symbolizing the taking away of the negativity of sexual abuse, and expressed their honour in hearing the informal testimony. Everyone said that the process had given much to all attending. The woman and her daughter were praised for being “natural leaders” and urged to use that gift to do good. The woman’s sense of humour and fun was also celebrated. Those in attendance expressed feelings of pride in her strong testimony on her own behalf and appreciation for her testimony “opening my eyes.” The woman’s “fighting spirit” was seen as helping her to be strong, to lose fear, and to respond to life challenges with “mind, body and spirit.” Her friends reminded her that she also has to take up the challenge of teaching and leadership.

The informal testimony concluded with a prayer, recognizing that the session was not really over, but a beginning.

### GRANDMOTHER’S PRAYER

*We thank you, Creator, for this—for this day.*

*We thank you for guiding us through this circle and we thank you for all the things that were said here.*

*All the pain is going to be left here. Let it go.*

*And we thank you for all the special people that are here today to support [the woman] and to thank—to thank you, Creator, for letting us have this circle as it helps here and might be helping other people.*

*It might be starting something that we need in this city, so let us hope this is what it’s going to come to.*

*So let us thank the Creator for all the gifts that he gives us. Meegwetch.*

## “Sincere Gratitude”

A man in his forties had come from Ottawa with his counsellor and several supporters to give informal testimony. He started by explaining that it took much consideration to come to discuss some of the events of his life and the struggles faced as a sexual assault survivor. He indicated that “I had found myself getting into patterns that I now understand as consequences that come from being a male sexual abuse victim and some of the patterns are destructive patterns that we, as male survivors, can get into. It’s been quite a struggle for the last little while.”

His counsellor confirmed that the man did not need to go into detail in saying what he wanted to say, and that the man giving informal testimony could refer to his notes.

Because of physical and emotional nervousness in coming, the man giving testimony was grateful for those supporting him in informal testimony. He hoped that informal testimony could help to “free myself from past events.”

In his informal testimony, the man grouped what he said into three categories: the first section related to sincere gratitude to those in the lives of the man today; the second section concentrated on the early childhood years, issues of drug addiction, and the impact of sexual abuse in communities; the last section covered experiences with post-traumatic growth and recovery. In this last area, he indicated, he would address “areas that need further developments in the challenges that male sexual abuse presents.”

The man moved to express appreciation to those in his life today.

In speaking of his “partner, girlfriend and friend,” he said:

Your belief and trust in me is quite a new experience for me. I love you ... Your wit, your humour and your sarcasm is so refreshing. Your honesty and humility speak volumes about your character and your spirit. Your sensitivity is wonderful. Your innocence is so refreshing. You’re a beautiful soul.

One of the significant attributes that the man’s partner has brought is her own childhood history, which was a great contrast to his own. He indicated that it is important to know “some people grew up normally, with love and nurturing.” He observed, “Your family and friends are wonderful.” He noted that he believes his partner’s upbringing has made her optimistic in life.

The man giving informal testimony also spoke of his best friend, in recognition of the importance of lifelong friendships. This respected friend has been a role model showing “consistency that he has developed as a recovering person.” He attributed this man with giving him the understanding to walk the path of recovery. Of this friend he described as humble and intelligent, the man giving informal

testimony reflected on “his capacity to face reality, to confirm my own experiences, validate them through his own sharing and empathy. He set up conditions and planted seeds of awareness that are beyond measure and only God will be the judge of that.”

The man giving testimony also recognized a friend who had been his first Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor. He described his first sponsor as “another one of those men who was there for a newcomer in a consistent way for over 30 years.” He said, in giving thanks to his great friend who “makes me laugh when things get too serious,” “his empathetic nature and his example of membership in a fellowship of goodwill, his humour, his sympathy, his wit, his intellectual capacity to discern the truth and to handle that truth humbles me.”

The man giving testimony also paid tribute to a friend who came to hear the testimony, thanking him for “believing in me, trusting me and giving me the opportunities to value myself.” He said to this friend, “Thank you for your kindness and your generosity that are reminders of the importance of keeping my mouth shut. Your community spirit and optimism and your encouragement and support are valued.”

The man giving testimony also recognized a friend and counsellor at an Ottawa facility assisting those recovering from addictions, describing him as a “gentle giant spirit,” a man of “compassion and professionalism” with a “dedication to creating awareness of both sexual abuse survivors and addictions” in the Ottawa area.

The man went on to recognize his family doctor whose “sense of boundaries, honesty, compassion and professionalism guides me to taking care of my health.” He thanked his “challenging therapist” who is working with him at this time, in the context of specialized expertise for men. He also indicated his appreciation for a specialist in hepatitis C. The man giving testimony indicated that this physician showed dedication to finding solutions for the hepatitis epidemic as well as showing objectivity and sensitivity in discussing hepatitis issues, including one of the causes, which relates to drug addiction.

The man giving testimony spoke of three family members who have “shared similar struggles.” In thanking them, he said, “their discussions have enabled me to have compassion for both their experience and mine.”

The man giving informal testimony also acknowledged the Native people of the Algonquin and Iroquois Confederacy. His thanks were for “teaching me what a warrior’s worth is … about the importance of respect in relationships, to nature, to physical nature and spiritual nature and human nature; history and the sacred fire.” The man giving informal testimony went on to express gratitude for “my continued involvement in their culture and beliefs and rituals, such as the healing nature of the Lodge and the sacred fire, the hope, for the courage and example of leaders and Elders.”

The man giving testimony recalled with particular gratitude an occasion in which he was presented by an Inuit Elder and given the spiritual name Hémé Kusho (Silver Fox).

The man's spiritual development was important to him, and he also said, "I'd like to thank the universe for my Christ consciousness and for learning the importance of prayer and forgiveness."

The man giving testimony also expressed appreciation of governmental support in his education, health recovery, and "return to sanity." He also thanked the Inquiry as part of the Ministry of the Attorney General "for having me here and to try to find solutions, answers to what can be done, not only in the Cornwall community, to ensure the safety of children."

In recognizing many people who are important in his life, the man concluded this section of his informal testimony with a loving passage regarding his son:

And most importantly, I'd like to thank God for my son whose needs for a Dad are so important regarding breaking the cycle of generational abuse, whose love and truth teach me about faith, hope and what's truly important in the whole scheme of things: family.

The man giving testimony then went on to discuss his own childhood circumstances, growing up just outside Cornwall. He was the youngest in a very large family. He indicated that his father was an alcoholic who worked in sales. His mother was a housewife and also a victim of abuse. She had anxiety and depression disorders that seriously impaired her parenting ability. The man giving testimony reported that among his siblings were two with developmental handicaps and three with bipolar disorder. The man recalls he was "born into trauma." About a year before the man giving testimony was born, his mother miscarried. In that period, she had also suffered the loss of another child, who was less than a year old at death. In addition to all this tragedy, an older sister had become pregnant, and was sent away to give birth and give up her first-born.

As a child, the man reported, he "raised himself." The home environment was dominated by alcohol and the conduct of alcoholic parents. Often the parents were like children and the children had to take adult responsibilities beyond their years. Older siblings in the family simply left when they could. This meant that the man, as the youngest, was abandoned to the "care" of an alcoholic father and an exhausted, depressed mother. There was neglect in the home, and the departure of siblings, combined with parental indifference and rejection, reinforced severe feelings of abandonment.

One of his responses as a child was to be "rebellious and defiant." This was a way to get attention, even if it was negative. Confrontation became a way of

coping. In the family dynamic, he was “the scapegoat,” blamed for numerous matters beyond his control.

Outside of the family, there was little nurturing. The man reported that he attended a Catholic school as a child, where he experienced strict physical discipline. Even in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2, he recalled, he was locked in closets as a way of responding to him or controlling him. Ultimately, he was placed in a “behaviour group” of several other children. In the circumstances of the school environment, he reports suffering alienation from normal classroom interactions and other children, being part of a group other children saw negatively. He felt “labelled and segregated.” The school authorities did not look into the home circumstances that affected him; instead, the situation was characterized as due to his “behaviour.”

In looking at his history, the man giving informal testimony identified three specific instances of abuse that stood out in his mind as important to relay as examples of the various environments of abuse to which he had been subjected as a child.

At about age ten, he was set upon, beaten, and sexually abused by older kids, both boys and girls. This local gang shamed him and sexually abused him while he was coming home alone from swimming. There was no follow-up for him after this traumatic incident.

At age twelve, he had a job working at a nearby farm. His first employer sexually abused him in this isolated place. Also, isolated in his family circumstances, he had no one to tell or to help him deal with the impact of this abuse.

Not long after, he reports that he met two priests who “groomed” him, recognizing his vulnerability and need for attention. He recalled that his mother was called to see if he could do “odd jobs” for a priest. While working for this priest, that priest started “grooming” conduct. This led to his sexual abuse by this priest. The man giving testimony recalled that after this initial sexual molestation, he was deemed to be “pliable enough,” and that he was then sent to another priest, having been assessed as “ready” or “ripe for rape.” Again, he was sexually abused but had no place to go to get help.

By the early age of thirteen, the man giving testimony reported, he had already become a drug addict, seeking in drugs a way to cope. School was of little interest, and at age sixteen, he quit school and moved to Ottawa. About a year later, he had become an intravenous drug addict. Drug addiction claimed him until he found recovery at the age of twenty-four. He reported, however, that he frequented treatment centres for years and had to stay in psychiatric hospitals. Because drug addiction can lead to health conditions like hepatitis C, he noted, it affects more than an individual—it affects the whole community.

After recovery from his drug addiction, the man returned to education, ultimately becoming a social worker. He also stayed away from drinking alcohol, having joined Alcoholics Anonymous as well as Narcotics Anonymous.

Education also meant that the man giving informal testimony could seek wisdom in reading authors whose explanations of the importance of developing character “have shown me the way of the warrior, the integrity of man and the true nature of self-worth and self-esteem.”

In the course of recovery, one of the issues was correctly diagnosing the man giving testimony. He appreciated that professionals at a well-regarded facility in Ottawa confirmed that “all along” he had a “weighted diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.” It was noted that it is often the case that those suffering from the impact of childhood sexual abuse are misdiagnosed; this was also the case with the man giving testimony.

In the course of his own journey in recovery, the man pointed to triggers associated with his childhood traumas and addictions. He reported a need for constant vigilance. One thing that helped him in putting his difficult childhood into perspective was discussion with some family members. In these discussions, he has received “long-awaited confirmation” of the alcoholism that runs in his family and the loneliness it brought for many in the family. His confusion as a child was in part occasioned by not having confirmation or recognition of what he experienced in an alcoholic home environment. He said of these helpful discussions:

These discussions have enabled me to have compassion for both their experience and mine. It was about a year and a half ago when I finally had some manner of compassion for myself. Before that time, I strictly judged myself endlessly.

For this man, the recovery journey benefited from the breaking of isolation often associated with childhood abuse. He said that “it’s just the sharing of two victims’ experiences that has brought me many things.” As well, he found fellowship at Narcotics Anonymous, where members were critical to developing an “eventual feeling of family and sorting the confusion that’s in my head.” He also found that AA, in “its spirit of service,” provided examples of value in his life journey.

The man giving informal testimony did point to his experience as a boy and man as needing the support of specialized services for men. He commented on his gratitude in being referred to The Men’s Project by a facility in Ottawa that had supported him in his recovery from drug addiction. He felt that advocacy

for male sexual abuse survivors is paramount, as the public awareness of prevalence and impact needs to be raised. It needs to continue, in his view.

In conclusion, the man giving testimony emphasized the importance of “letting go.” He also indicated that it was important to put safeguards in place to identify and address abuse of children and young people. He stressed the importance of institutional vigilance and creative treatment models. Most of all, the man giving informal testimony indicated the need for “collective advocacy for a safer, saner future for our children and the recommitment to validating the experience of abuse survivors and better definition and capacity to meet the needs of these survivors and their families.” The family connection to service needs was emphasized, as well as services for men.

In giving informal testimony, the man had shown emotion and demonstrated capacity to “let go in tears” and to allow himself to feel and articulate compassion for his own difficult life journey. He was commended for his courage in doing this and in caring for himself. The man testifying was also recognized for his eloquence and intelligence, for the steps taken in his own journey, and for his dedication to his friends and family. The Advisory Panel expressed their sense of honour and gratitude in hearing the informal testimony of this man and in having a better understanding of his spiritual journey. An apt ending for this testimony would then be from a quotation given by the man giving informal testimony:

If your only prayer is sincere gratitude, that will suffice and bring you to another level of consciousness and a better state of mind.

## “Pressures of Manhood”

A man came to speak of his experiences as a devoted husband and father. He explained that both his wife and daughter were sexually abused as children and that his wife was also sexually abused by a therapist who was supposed to help the family deal with parenting and marriage issues. The impact on him and his family has been profound.

The man giving informal testimony explained that he had been aware of some of his wife’s experiences as a child when he started to date her and early in their marriage. However, it was not until their firstborn was a toddler that the family needed and sought help. His wife had started to have different “trigger” responses, going back to her own childhood abuse. This affected the marriage relationship. And their hard-to-handle daughter needed special help—the whole family needed assistance and were increasingly distressed: “We were getting lost.”

The man reported that the counsellor the family was working with slowly began to “phase out” the husband and young daughter in counselling sessions and focused on “grooming” the man’s wife, claiming “she was the problem” in the family and needed special help. Ultimately, his wife was sexually abused by this counsellor. In time, the family extracted themselves from this therapist and pursued legal help, but it was so expensive and complex that they settled for less than they thought fair, after re-mortgaging their home. He spoke of feeling “put under pressure, where you are under a financial burden where if you don’t accept you are going to lose everything you ever worked for.” He still feels it was unjust for the institution involved to spend so much money defending its interests instead of helping his family deal with the impact of abuse. He indicated that in the course of pursuing the institution, other complainants came to light. The family hopes that, at least, that their actions could prevent future abuse by this therapist.

Finding out that his wife was abused during their marriage “affected his manhood.” In his words, “it ripped me apart.” As well, his wife stopped enjoying intimacy, resulting in the man’s feeling guilty for wanting sexual relations and feeling rejected by his wife. Despite this, the man giving informal testimony stayed with his wife, and they will soon celebrate their silver anniversary: “I don’t know that there’s many people that are able to stay together as a couple that long and be faithful to each other and try to work things out the way we’re trying to work things out.”

The man giving informal testimony recounted that there have also been issues with his birth family. He feels they do not understand the impact of abuse on those abused, or what happened in terms of “grooming” and manipulation of his wife. As a result, they tend to blame his wife and criticize him and his daughter in a hurtful way. This makes it more difficult for his family, although he makes an effort to continue relationships with his siblings.

Also, the man giving testimony finds at work that it is hard to get time off to deal with issues that arise—attending counselling or court or helping his family in other ways. As a result, he feels torn between work and family obligations, and finds that there is no support on a consistent basis. The man was concerned that counselling now available through the Inquiry not run out: to heal, this worry has to be remedied, in his view. And for those with low incomes, the transportation subsidy for travel to counselling is critical.

He feels that although his daughter is now living on her own, she has lost parts of her childhood due to abuse. For example, she has not completed her schooling because she found being in a classroom and being told what to do was too much pressure. He feels his child needs support to get an education. To move on with her life after abuse, she needs an advocate for her life. Although she is technically an adult, he thinks she has to complete some of the tasks of her teen years and that she deserves more social support for this.

When he first found out about his daughter's sexual abuse as a child, the man giving testimony was stunned. The perpetrator was a relative of his wife, but at first he did not know who it was and was speculating, incorrectly at first, as to the identity of the abuser: "The repercussions out of that were unbelievable." Later, his daughter was also the victim of an attempted sexual assault. This occurred in her young teen years, and the assailant was in his forties.

The man reported that he found the school system unsympathetic to the impact of abuse. For example, his daughter would have flashbacks and need to leave the classroom. Otherwise, she would have a traumatic "meltdown" in the presence of other students. Leaving was not permitted, and indeed his wife reported that the daughter was threatened with suspension. As well, he indicated that authorities at the school did not respond appropriately to bullying, which increased his daughter's fear, anxiety, and isolation and in turn affected her school performance. He reported frustration that his daughter did not receive the support needed at the time and that there is no mechanism to help her today in returning to school.

One of the additional difficulties for the family was that there was no access to compensation for him, as the family breadwinner, for taking time off work to attend court with his daughter. It was critical to attend to support and protect his vulnerable daughter, both for her and for him, but getting time off was a problem and there was no compensation for lost income. He finds the financial pressure "unbearable" and worries about the family's financial situation constantly. The pressure builds up, and he has found little practical help.

The man giving informal testimony feels strongly that denial within families and society needs to stop. And he says, "The whole community needs to know about the effects of this abuse—on their cities, townships, and rural areas—

everyone can probably play a little part.” He and his wife also think there should be more education in the classroom, including having survivors speak. This could result in prevention of abuse.

Another mechanism for social change that the man giving informal testimony favours is public education on television, but he thinks some aspects have to be “hard hitting,” as is the case with drinking and driving. This might result in workplaces, for example, being more sensitive to the needs of families when a member of the family is abused. Right now, he feels isolated and under constant pressure to be both a good worker and a good family man.

All in attendance recognized that the man giving informal testimony had never given up on his commitment to his wife, and praised his constancy in the face of many difficulties. He continues to strive to fill his role as a father in the face of a lack of social support—a true man.

## **“From Just Existing to Actually Living”**

A woman came with supporters and recounted an abusive childhood, during which she was abused sexually, physically, and psychologically in the family home in several provinces across Canada. She also reported numerous incidents of sexual assault after moving out of the family home, which were never reported to authorities.

She was one of six children, and as the oldest girl, she was responsible for most of the housework and for taking care of the younger children because her mother was “like a teenager herself.” She described a childhood of abuse and neglect that impacted upon her self-esteem and made her feel shame. In recalling her father’s conduct, she now thinks he had an untreated mental illness, but “nobody got any help.” As a result, she became quiet and insular, not talking to anyone or making eye contact, which did not change until into her twenties. She left her family home before she turned eighteen to attend college and began to realize that what she had experienced at home was not normal: “I thought I was leaving everything behind, but you cannot walk away from abuse. It follows you and impacts everything you are like an invisible painful coating.” She also felt enormous guilt for leaving her siblings in the family home due to her role as mother.

At the college, she sought the help of a counsellor to deal with her abusive past. She reports that counsellor sexually assaulted her. The incident was never reported to the police. At the time, the woman blamed herself, not recognizing the responsibility of those abusing her for their assaults. As a result of this assault at college, the woman stated that she had no trust in counsellors for many years, and the experience caused her to quit school.

She has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. She also reported having issues with trust and control, especially with respect to food, which she attributes to not having enough to eat when she was a child. She explained that her father used food to control the children.

The abuse she suffered as a child was never reported to the authorities. She stated that her mother, a registered nurse, knew of the abuse that her father perpetrated on her and her siblings but never reported it. She also stated that some teachers at her school had commented on bruises that she and her siblings presented with, but again, nothing was ever reported.

The woman married an abusive man, and later realized, “I married my father.” He treated her in much the same manner as her father had. She reported many incidents of domestic violence, some of which were witnessed by her children and which traumatized them. She worries about her ex-husband abusing and neglecting one of their children, who lives with him and is cut off from his siblings. She has reported this concern to the authorities, but to no avail. While she is now

divorced from her husband, she and her children live with the psychological impact of the abuse on a daily basis. However, she has worked at being a “good mom” and her daughters are in a good school, due to her intervention, and enjoy school friendships.

Despite her history of abuse, the woman reported that she has come to a place where she is able to thrive and she has some positive memories of being helped by community agencies with programs and Christmas gifts when she needed them. After returning to school after a twenty-year absence, she has now become a helping professional. She states that she has always been very resourceful, often working two or three jobs to support herself and her family. She has also found her voice and is able to advocate for herself and her family, unlike when she was a child and young adult and was very quiet and unable to speak up constructively. And she is now in a healthy and loving relationship where she feels supported, and she and her partner work on their relationship.

Several years ago she began seeing a counsellor who has been instrumental in helping her deal with her past. She states that seeing this counsellor “changed my life from being just existing to actually living.”

She states that it was unfair that she did not have anyone to turn to about her abusive situation growing up.

She would like to see more protection for children suffering from abuse. She would like to see the laws with respect to abuse consistent across Canada, and court systems that are more responsive to the needs of those who are in abusive situations. She also stated that more educational opportunities for those who have been abused are needed. She commented positively on a workshop by Dr. Melrose sponsored by the Inquiry and St. Lawrence College as an example of a helpful educational session.

The woman giving testimony expressed frustration with the fragmented social service system, where agencies will only deal with one problem rather than looking at people holistically. She stated that agencies must begin to deal with all of the problems clients have in order to help them fully. She also advocated for more education for professionals about the impact of abuse and hopes that they would hear from survivors directly. And she wants services for boys as well as girls.

All attending recognized the woman’s strength of purpose, and admired her for her commitment and openness to her same-sex relationship. They were glad to hear she was looking forward to the rest of her life.

## **“It’s Very Divided in Cornwall”**

A man came with several supporters to give informal testimony regarding his life and the profound impact abuse had on him and his life journey. At the beginning of his informal testimony, the man giving testimony indicated that he expected changes to be made to his testimony record, such that his story would be inaccurately reported to minimize responsibility of agencies. He also believes that the Inquiry’s job was to minimize the role of agencies in Cornwall and area in relation to sexual abuse.

The man giving testimony was born in Cornwall in the 1960s and was the youngest boy with four older sisters. When he was a child, his sisters treated him “like a doll,” playing with him and caring for him. He was an active child, inquisitive and smart, and his mother recalled that he had to be watched constantly. At the age of thirteen months, he was seriously injured by a drunk driver, ending up with a broken pelvis and leg and a prolonged hospital stay. During these early years, his parents also took in foster children on an emergency basis.

When the man giving testimony was about four years old, his parents lived in an area that was not safe for children. The parents were trying to work hard and buy a home but could not afford very much so were in a less desirable neighbourhood. The children commonly played in an area near the water. There, a boy of about fifteen found the four-year-old, molested him, and left him a deep window well, where he was abandoned, crying and traumatized, until his sister’s friend found him. Ironically, he reports, his abuser was the brother of the drunk driver who had injured him. As a young child, he could not explain what happened. Less than a year later, he was sliding on snow with his best friend on a bank near the water. Tragically, the young friend slid into the water and drowned. The man has felt grief and guilt all his life for the death of his little friend, and recalls with great clarity seeing and kissing the child’s face at his funeral. Not long after, his parents moved to a better neighbourhood.

By this time, his parents had adopted a foster daughter who had been seriously mistreated and had been exposed to drugs and alcohol during pregnancy. She was later diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome, with all the accompanying consequences of this. He indicated that his parents had never been told of the child’s history and could not prepare or get special help. The man reported that this child affected his family because of her behavioural problems and added to the stresses of a childhood with many other traumatic experiences. For example, his adopted sister was often in trouble for shoplifting, and the police would come around. He found this humiliating. As a young teen, she had to go back into care due to her many issues, including her violence. This was very traumatic for the whole family, as it was “already dysfunctional.” As an adult, he has no contact with this sister, who he says is “known to police.”

In recalling his childhood, the man laughed that with so many girls in his life, no one should wonder he was gay! Sadly, he also experienced severe bullying and rejection at school due to his sexual orientation. He had to change schools but still suffered terrible name-calling even at age nine, and endured cruel homophobic comments. He was excluded from school activities and, despite being intelligent, came to be afraid of school and society.

Home was not a safe place either, and his mother was often seriously ill. He recalls that his father and some uncles would drink and abuse the female children. Some of these men, he reported, are active in their church—"hypocrites." The mother would often leave the children to babysit each other because she needed a break and the older children were old enough to babysit. He reported his adopted sister would act out and sometimes the police would come, resulting in shame and disruption.

As he entered his early teen years, the man reported, he was routinely picked up by men when he walked home. The men showed him attention. He liked them, as he had a growing realization of his attraction to men, but did not understand the molestation and exploitation. He felt great confusion about his sexuality—attracted to men but frightened due to his religious upbringing. He felt he could not tell his family, as he feared that "people would turn their backs on me because of rejection from society." He recalled that he attended at the police station to report a sexual assault. The father waited in the hall while the fourteen-year-old spent two hours detailing what had happened. He was asked sexually explicit questions, which he found very embarrassing, as he was traumatized by the assault and was sexually innocent. In the end, he reports that he was made to feel, and it was suggested to his mother, that it was his fault for "picking up men."

The man testifying indicated that the record of the interview was either not prepared and maintained or was prepared but subsequently destroyed. "The assailant walked," and the man giving testimony indicated he never talked about it again with his family.

At one stage, he was in a "special ed" class, even though he is intelligent. He thinks the culmination of trauma had an effect on his emotional functioning. It also increased bullying, because being in a special class made him vulnerable.

In high school, the man found that he was rejected by many other kids, particularly boys from rich families in the neighbourhood that he lived in. This was due to homophobia. However, he did have some good friends who were positive influences on him as they came from well-educated homes.

When the man was age fifteen, his father died, and "it was like I was just thrown into the world." He does have some positive recollections of his father—for example, when his father stood up to a priest who had physically hurt him.

However, his father also sexually abused his sisters. Today, he wonders if his father was a survivor of abuse himself, based on some comments his father had made about his own religious-school experiences.

By sixteen, the man giving testimony had quit school and moved out west. In his twenties, he became a Buddhist. The man explained that he needed to be spiritual but not to follow the religious experiences of his Catholic upbringing.

On his return to Cornwall, the man was persistent in trying to get a job and start a government career. While at work, he reported, he encountered an autocratic boss who frightened other staff members. He reported to his supervisor that sexual overtures were made to him and efforts were made to isolate him in situations where sexual activity could occur. The man giving informal testimony refused to comply and he believes that his subsequent loss of his position was due to this. This affected his future as it cut him off from a good government job, and the related stress also exacerbated his serious health condition.

The man indicated that he had met a man who had been in his life eighteen years: "He brought a lot of love into my life and self-meaning for me." He is proud that his sisters have always accepted his sexual orientation and his partner. However, he feels they have done better in life by getting well educated and establishing careers.

The man giving testimony reported that when he wanted to address the impact of his abuse as a child and the incidents of molestation he reported at work, he encountered many problems. He found that it was difficult to get an accurate account of what he was alleging in the hands of police and the courts. As a result, he felt that it made it look as if he was exaggerating or had been coached. This distressed him because he wanted to give only an honest rendition and had not been coached. As well, after he came forward to Project Truth, it was recommended that he obtain therapy. As a result, he followed this advice in seeking out the recommended agency, but was rejected as a gay man. He reports that he has heard about others who have had similar problems. Due to his history, he said that he had difficulty with rejection. He recalled that this rejection sent him into depression for several months after and also his serious heart condition worsened. His depression did not improve until he found his own counsellor. He contrasted the service that he had trouble with to other counselling services, including his own, where there are many satisfied clients.

He finds today that he still encounters hurtful prejudice in Cornwall. For example, in trying to get an apartment he was taunted, "Are you a guy or a girl?" In addition, he finds his association with the Inquiry has labelled him as a "trouble-maker," which he finds hurtful and unfair because he is fighting for Cornwall victims. He recounted several unpleasant incidents that occurred, and the breakdown of previously pleasant relationships.

The man indicated he was dissatisfied with both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Inquiry. He felt that there was insufficient willingness to stand up for victims and those supporting victims, and also to address service problems with some agencies. He wants people to know, and the Commissioner to know, that after his dealing with the Inquiry, “they sent me into a suicidal depression.” This is one of the reasons he has withdrawn from Phase 2 activities. The man giving testimony felt that he was not permitted to give the full picture of the truth because he was not given the opportunity to talk about the details of certain incidents of sexual assault. He also feels he was not treated respectfully by counsel and felt that his life story was treated ‘like a joke,’ especially his report of criminal sexual assault.

In terms of recommendations, the man giving informal testimony wants accuracy when police record victims’ recollections. He also wants inclusionary services, particularly inclusion of gay men.

The man giving testimony expressed disappointment that city politicians were not taking an interest in the work of Phase 2 of the Inquiry. He said, “It’s very divided in Cornwall. You can’t ask for recommendations because of the division.” As a result he feels many have “given up.” He regrets that many good ideas are not proceeding because of this. But he is focusing on doing the right things in his own life, including working on getting out of Cornwall because Cornwall is a place of trauma for him.

Those in attendance recognized the terrible pain and disappointment that the man had experienced. They also commented on the man’s many positive characteristics—his talent in music, his sustaining of lifelong friendships and relationships with his natural sisters, and his quick wit and intelligence. They were honoured to hear his story.

## “You Know There are Lots of Us out There”

A man was welcomed to informal testimony, accompanied by his counsellor and his daughter. The man reported being sexually abused by a cousin over several years when he was a child. He and his family would attend his cousin's family's house every weekend, and the abuse took place there. He stated that the abuse stopped when he was about fourteen years old and was deemed old enough to stay home by himself by his grandmother, whom he credits with stopping the abuse. He no longer visited his cousin's house after this. He suspects his cousin may have abused others in the family.

During the time that he was being abused, the man reported, he began to use drugs. Once his abusive cousin knew that he was using drugs, he began to supply them to the young boy. As a result, the man giving testimony has battled with drug addiction over the years and has had several “clean” periods and periods where he relapses into “using,” when he feels anger toward his abuser and about the abuse. The man giving informal testimony has constantly wondered whether he would have had problems with addiction had it not been for the abuse he suffered and the drugs supplied by his abuser. He also reported cutting himself as a way to help with his anger about the abuse. Of the cutting, he observed, “And it does take the pain away, believe it or not.” The man has been hospitalized several times over the years for psychiatric conditions and addictions.

As a result of the abuse, the man has suffered from dissociation. He stated that he “disappears” from time to time and that his belief is that this is related to the trauma he suffered: “I don’t know where I go, I just go.” He does not refer to himself as a “survivor” of sexual abuse, as he does not feel that he has “survived.” He reported feeling a lot of guilt and shame and feels that he has been a failure in life. He also reported that a great deal of the guilt and shame he feels stem from his body’s natural reaction to the abuse. He stated that he cannot “let this go.” As an adult, he feels “haunted” by his experiences.

His marriage broke down as a result of his addiction and he is now receiving a disability pension to support himself.

He did not report the abuse to anyone when he was young, although he decided to report it recently as an adult. He indicated that his experience was positive in terms of how the police officer responded, and he knows he can contact the officer in future. After going to the authorities to make a statement, however, his family was not supportive of his decision and he has subsequently not followed up with the authorities about his statement. His father blamed him for the abuse happening and made hurtful comments. The man said that he is “tired of carrying it”—the burden of guilt that should be his abuser’s.

The man giving testimony said that his belief is that his immediate family knew about the abuse but did not say anything at the time it was happening or try

to stop it, with the exception of his grandmother. When he went to the authorities recently to report the abuse, his mother said that she had suspected there was something going on, and he asked her why she didn't do anything about it back then. She did not respond. He recalled that there were various "secrets" in his family; perhaps this was why his mother was not responsive. He still wavers on whether to follow through with pressing charges against his cousin, feeling that it may give him some closure but knowing that it would also be very painful and disruptive to his life, especially given his difficult relationship with his father. The man does express compassion for his father, as he believes his father suffered childhood abuse but never talks about it.

Despite the hardships that this man has dealt with as a result of the abuse he suffered, he reported, he was starting to turn his life around. He began attending a men's group that he found very helpful for dealing with his emotions and pain. He also feels less isolated: "You know there are lots of us out there." He has, as well, been seeing an individual counsellor, who has been very supportive. It has been some time since he was hospitalized, and he is currently not using drugs and has been drug-free for years. The man expressed a lot of joy when talking about his children and his grandchildren. He reported having a very close relationship with his daughter.

His hope for the future is that children will be able to tell someone about abuse they have suffered and that they have someone trusted, someone who will believe them, to go to who will tell them, "Don't hold it within." He also hoped that more services, like group counselling, would be made available to men so that they can have someone to talk to and to share their feelings with. And he favours a public campaign on TV and radio to promote and maintain awareness.

The man was thanked for his testimony and his courage, and asked to remember that the guilt he feels is not his but his abuser's. He was praised for the positive changes he has been making recently in his life.

## “Stuck Between Two Mountains”

A man from outside Cornwall was welcomed to informal testimony, accompanied by his fiancée and a close friend. The Advisory Panel indicated that it was an honour to receive this testimony.

The man giving informal testimony explained that he had “wonderful parents and a wonderful family.” They were very poor, and as the baby of the family, he had “lots of hand-me-downs.” As a child, he was shy and did not speak much, as he was tongue-tied, leading to stuttering. This, combined with being poor, led to teasing at school. As a result, family and Church were the focus of his young life.

His father worked hard early in his life, but due to heart problems had to live on a disability pension by the time the youngest had come along. The father had only a grade 3 education. His mother had only had the chance to get to grade 7, and stayed home to care for the kids and do housework.

Part of family life was attendance at church every Sunday. His family would also listen to Saturday prayer services on the radio, kneeling with their prayer beads. His parents saw being a priest as “representing God” and deferred to priests all their lives. An older brother was interested in being a priest; he would even act out serving the mass with the children of the family. Until high school, the man giving testimony attended a Catholic school and felt he was “raised by nuns.” As a child, the man giving testimony thought of the priesthood, “With the heart I have, it’s like helping people out. I want to reach out and help the best I can.” Such an ambition found complete support in his religious family.

When he was a teenager, it seemed as if “opportunity knocked on the door” in terms of pursuing his priestly vocation. A new young priest had come to the local parish. At the first mass, the priest stared at him where he was sitting in his usual back-row pew. The man giving testimony explained that in the community, “the poor people sat in the back and the rich people sat in the front.” After the service, he was surprised when the priest approached him. The conversation that ensued was about setting up a youth group. The man brought his friends to the church, and within weeks there were over fifty teenage boys and girls. One of the projects was the production of a musical—an exciting activity for the rural area.

Within three weeks to a month, the man giving testimony indicated the priest would invite him over to the rectory on his own and with other kids. There was drinking, which surprised him, but because the host was a priest, he thought, “It must be okay—something young priests did.” The drinking and constant contact led to sexual abuse. After some weeks, the man testifying felt that “this is not right,” and spoke to the priest, who then promised to stop the abuse. The man giving testimony was very anxious “because I didn’t want to let my friends know

that something was going on.” He also began to wonder if he was gay, and to feel guilt and shame.

After a while, the man giving testimony reported, his drinking became heavy—every night, and he even brought a bottle of whiskey to school. The priest supplied liquor, gave him access to his car, and also paid him to do odd jobs at the church and cemetery. Despite the continued sexual abuse (as the priest broke his promise to abstain), the man giving testimony indicated, he got satisfaction from doing good work at the church: “I wanted to be at church as I had this feeling, God is looking at me and I’m doing a good thing.” At the same time, he questioned why God allowed the abuse.

During his time in and out of the church and the rectory, the man giving testimony reported, he noticed other young men and sexual activities between the priest and visiting priests, and between the priest and other adult men in the community. But no one said anything.

His parents were pleased to see their son receive so much attention from the priest and hoped their son would enter the priesthood. Having no knowledge of how to become a priest, they gave the priest authority over their son’s education and recreational activities, and the rectory became “like a second home.” He went on many local trips with the priest, visiting other churches, other priests, and nuns. He recalls the kindness of the nuns—“that was a good part.” Out-of-province trips included another boy who was also sexually abused. For these poor rural boys, seeing New York, swimming in the ocean, and going to restaurants were very exciting experiences they would not otherwise have had. The man giving testimony noted he “made himself drown in liquor” before “anything happened,” reducing the trauma of abuse: “It was like I was leaving my body and I didn’t want to feel this any more.”

One spring break, the man testifying reported, he went to a church in Cornwall and his parish priest introduced him to a more senior person. He was asked about his family, their financial situation, and so on. He wondered at the time if it was related to his stated interest in the priesthood.

The man testifying also recalled an incident in which he was taken to a guarded campsite with the priest, who left him in the car after he refused to come, in the words of the priest, “to have the same treatment that I give you at home.” The man testifying recalled being frightened and seeing other teenage boys and older men at the campsite. He drank to deal with his fear, having to use bushes to go to the bathroom. When this happened, security guards looked at him and he became so fearful, he sat in the car, shaking, until morning.

The priest who abused him was transferred to another, nearby parish. But because his parents had given the priest authority over their son’s education, hoping for his elevation to the priesthood, the man reported, the priest made him

stop a good co-op job and transfer high schools. He was unhappy in the new school, drank heavily, and did poorly. By this time, he no longer wanted to be a priest because he saw the misconduct of this priest, but he also was “trying not to upset people.” His parents continued to have faith in the priest, who “just made himself at home” at their place. In the small community, there were many interconnections, and he felt pressure to be involved in the Church and with the building of a new retreat house. Ironically, his parents saw his involvement with the priest as keeping him from a “bad crowd” of boys in the community who did drugs. In later years, some people admitted that “they felt something was going on” because of the small group of young men around the priest. But no one said anything, and the man testifying found it was hard to extract himself from the Church: “I also wanted to be in there because I liked the Church. I wanted to be involved with the production, but the other part didn’t want me there.” None of the involved young men spoke to each other. Speaking of another boy who was abused, he said, “We were best friends, but when it came to that subject, it was like a closed door.” He also felt he would not tell his father because his father “would kill him” (the priest). So he felt “stuck between two mountains.”

The man testifying was continuing to come frequently to the rectory as a teenager when a disturbing incident occurred. Usually, on Saturdays after mass a group of young men came and drank, ate snacks, and watched TV at the rectory. That night he had so much to drink, he stayed overnight. Late at night, he reported, another man entered the room and, while wearing white gloves, began to masturbate. This was repeated on about three other occasions. This incident made the man giving testimony so nervous and upset that he urinated himself. Whenever abuse happened, he reported, he would hide in the church basement to avoid abusers.

When the abusive priest left the area, contact stopped: “He’s out of my life.” The priest returned only at the request of the man’s parents to officiate at the man’s first wedding. The priest ultimately died of a sexually transmitted illness. The man giving testimony “kept my mouth shut for 32 years.” For example, he said nothing at his wedding, not wanting to disturb his parents.

The man giving testimony explained that due to the stress of abuse and drinking, he dropped out of school: “My mind was like a zombie.” But he then got a job, upgraded his education in a helping profession, and had his own apartment. The man was still drinking heavily but was also involved in his work, upgrading his education, and sports volunteer work. Over time, he “turned his life more positively,” but his work required lifting patients and he ultimately had a serious back injury, requiring two months in a rehabilitation hospital. He was entitled to Worker’s Compensation but has since got another job within his physical capacity. Looking back, he recalls, “my life was a hard life.”

Today the man is pleased to say he is with a woman who is understanding and “listens more.” They are looking forward to a June wedding and enjoying their family life, gardening, and their volunteer work. He has a loving relationship with his son and enjoys two granddaughters. The man testifying is active in helping other survivors and feels his work has increased his own knowledge and that this in turn helps his own life. Counselling has been helpful to him, as has learning meditation. Although he has religious faith, he does not believe in organized religion and feels uncomfortable when seeing a clerical collar: “It is a trigger for recall of abuse.”

In terms of recommendations, the man giving testimony is a strong proponent of an adult resource centre where anyone who was abused can come and say, “I need help.” He does not want “to see anybody else go through what I went through.” He feels that today people are more open and if a centre existed, survivors would come: “They all have a story to tell, lots of stories to tell.” He also wants institutions to take victims seriously, keep good records, and improve procedures. Also, the public should know what the procedures are—what to expect and how to know if the usual process is not being followed. As well, he feels that if sentences are not more strict, “victims are not wanting to press charges because we see nothing happens.” As well, judges should receive training so they understand the significant impact of abuse, and in particular, of historical abuse.

In looking back on the Cornwall Public Inquiry, the man testifying sees both good and bad—“But at least we got to tell our story.” He hopes recommendations will benefit victims, in particular with a resource centre and continued counselling, “as long as the Commissioner can put it there.” He points out that people will need counselling when the Inquiry Report is released, as it will bring back emotions and memories.

All attending commented on the growth and maturity shown by the man testifying. He has learned to be measured and to “take the high road,” even in response to unfair treatment he has experienced recently. He is holding onto his healing and his commitment to the future: “He is a good man.”

## Receiving Informal Testimony: The Experience of Listening

Janet Handy is a member of the Cornwall Public Inquiry Advisory Panel. She participated in receiving informal testimony at twenty-one sessions. Here are her words, reflecting on her experience in receiving informal testimony and speaking directly to those who gave testimony:

The experience of listening to the victims' accounts of abuse was more of a very tough spiritual journey than a mental journey of imagining the traumas to the body or the torture of the mind. Instead, it was like diving deep and resurfacing again and again as the speaker allowed me into his or her private space where she or he had given voice to these horrors. Indeed, that they must articulate those traumas both seems a further demeaning and at the same time is the unwelcomed path to freedom from the past.

The abused person has a voice that speaks to the soul's agony, and while the words sound at once both rational and matter-of-fact, at the same time they mask a wailing sound that, if there were no words, would capture the essence of being at the core of trauma. Sometimes it was a child's weak, tired, and afraid voice. Sometimes it was the adult soothing the inner child. Sometimes the speaker came to us through the cold, icy voice of raw emotions buried deep for the sake of survival. Sometimes we heard the victory of the resilient voice, having made it thus far and still being here to speak its truth.

I am often asked, "How do you measure success in this field of listening and responding to survivors of child sexual abuse?" Is it that someone did not die that day so long ago and is here to tell us about it so we can

understand, for others, what to do now? Is it that someone does not commit suicide today and will grow old with their family and friends? Or is it that someone was willing to allow us in? I think the last was what I felt was a success each and every time I heard a Cornwall voice recount the past abuses of his or her childhood or youth.

In the end I was tired and full of grief, hope, and passion shared with those of you who came forward to give informal testimony. I had to cope with finding it very hard to be away from Cornwall as I wanted to stay and work more with all those I had come to know in Cornwall. You were, despite all you had been through, a welcoming chorus of courage and tenacity. Small-town grit was everywhere to be seen, with a big-city determination to speak the truth.

Thank you for your voices ... your courage does honour to your town's history.

*Janet Handy*

## Summary of Recommendations

During the course of informal testimony, those in attendance had the opportunity to make policy recommendations for the future. When this happened, the recommendations were set out in the text of each individual's informal testimony. I considered these recommendations in the preparation of my Phase 2 Report.

In addition, however, a final summary of recommendations has been prepared, grouping similar topics together. In some cases, recommendations made by different people were complementary or very similar and are therefore merged together. In this summation, recommendations made by several people have not been repeated but are noted with an asterisk. Some individuals made recommendations about their own circumstances; these are not included in this summary of recommendations but may be read in their individual testimony.

### Counselling and Treatment

1. Counselling Support for those already approved by the Cornwall Public Inquiry in Phase 2 should be continued until the individual in counselling decides he or she has no further need for counselling.\*
2. If it is not possible to extend Counselling Support until an individual decides to stop, the extension should at least continue for a significant period beyond the release of the Cornwall Public Inquiry Report as people will be affected by the Report's release.\*
3. Transportation subsidies for those travelling to counselling should continue.\*

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\*This indicates that a recommendation was made by more than one person.

4. Perpetrators of abuse should have access to counselling and treatment.
5. Perpetrators of abuse should be required to undergo mandatory treatment.\*
6. Affordable counselling across Ontario should be available to all those who have been sexually abused as children and youth and to their parents and spouses.\*
7. Creative treatment models for those abused as children should be developed and implemented.
8. Couples support groups should be created for couples where one or both spouses were sexually abused as children or young people. In particular, husbands and fathers need support if their wife or child has been abused.
9. Group counselling for men should be expanded and made widely available.\*

## Services

10. Services for survivors in Cornwall need to include survivors in service development and to treat them as part of the solution.\*
11. A “Men’s Safe House” should be established in Cornwall.\*
12. A centre or place for survivors, led by survivors, should be established in Cornwall and should include referral services to assist in moving survivors to needed services (“Adult Community Healing Resource Centre”).\*
13. Services for men through The Men’s Project should be extended in Cornwall and be more widespread across Ontario.\*
14. There should be more funds for services directed to men.\*
15. The Men’s Project should also be given funds for advocacy for services for men to support awareness of abuse of boys and men and the need for services for men.
16. A single “home-like” environment should be created in Cornwall where any relevant authorities can come to interview children or youth regarding abuse disclosures.
17. An educational opportunity fund or allowance should be created for adult survivors of abuse, so those abused as children can

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\*This indicates that a recommendation was made by more than one person.

- regain the education lost to them, in order to get better jobs and to have the satisfaction of educational success. If a person is receiving a disability pension, payment for education should not reduce their disability payments.\*
18. Survivors of sexual abuse should have access to basic training in financial planning, life skills, and literacy.
  19. There needs to be better definition of needed services for survivors of abuse and their families. Services need to extend to families.\*
  20. Services should be more integrated to respond more holistically to clients.
  21. Services for survivors of sexual abuse should be inclusionary and sensitive to gay men.
  22. Survivors of sexual abuse should have assistance with housing.\*

## **Workplace Response**

23. Workplaces should have a committee or designated place to talk about suspected sexual abuse of children and youth or about situations where a colleague is charged with abuse, with supportive policies to help those who report or are affected by the conduct of other staff members.
24. Managers in organizations should have training to understand and support staff who are profoundly affected by the sexual abuse of children or youth in their workplace; the impact on fellow workers should not be overlooked.

## **Education, Training, and Awareness**

25. Educational activities such as those sponsored by the Cornwall Public Inquiry in Phase 2 should be continued.\*
26. Education for professionals such as police or Crown attorneys about the impact of abuse should include hearing from survivors.\*
27. There should be collective advocacy for better future treatment of children and a recommitment to validation of the experiences of abuse survivors.

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\*This indicates that a recommendation was made by more than one person.

28. There should be awareness campaigns on television and radio. They should be “hard hitting,” like those against drinking and driving.\*
29. There should be widespread efforts to promote attitudinal change in respect to adult survivors, to see the “child in the adult survivor.”
30. There should be training for teachers, guidance counsellors, hospital workers, and anyone who has a job where there is interaction with children and youth to identify the signs of abuse so intervention can occur sooner, and to ensure there is follow-up if necessary or if there are any signs of injury.\*
31. There should be education for professionals on the different responses of boys and girls to abuse.
32. Self-defence classes should be taught at schools.
33. There needs to be education for parents and children.
34. The public should be educated about the harm caused in criticizing survivors and telling them to “get over it” or that “they are just in it for the money.”\*
35. Those who deal with children need to “listen to the kids” in a believing way. They should listen to disclosure and not think or assume that children or young people are lying.\*
36. The public should be made aware of the impact of abuse from a child’s perspective: stories, poems, art, and sculpture may be ways of raising awareness.
37. Any procedures or protocols that an institution has related to disclosures or suspicions of abuse of children and youth should be publicly communicated so the public will know if the procedures are being followed.
38. There should be education about sexual abuse in the classroom, including hearing from survivors.\*
39. There should be education about parenting and monitoring of children throughout their lives to detect issues arising related to poor parenting or abuse in the home.
40. There should be sensitivity training for professionals to understand why adult survivors may respond differently than others and to better understand mental illness.

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\*This indicates that a recommendation was made by more than one person.

## Care for Families and Children in Care

41. If there is a situation of neglect in a home with children, efforts should be made to support the families in order to keep the children in the home; parents may be able to learn to parent more appropriately and, with financial assistance, the children may be able to stay at home and avoid going into care.\*
42. Efforts should be made not to separate siblings in adoption or foster care.\*
43. If siblings are separated, efforts should be made to assist the siblings in knowing each other and to maintain meaningful contact on a regular basis.
44. Foster homes should be carefully evaluated with independent references, not references from family members. Investigations of any type of allegation should be fairly done.
45. Foster parents or adoptive parents should be better screened for appropriate matching with children and to ensure that they are not abusive.\*
46. Foster parents and adoptive parents should be given education on the appropriate treatment for children and on appropriate non-physical discipline.
47. If children are in foster care, there should be periodic unannounced visits and periodic interviews with children in care that are apart from those in authority in the home.\*
48. There should be better screening of those who have access to children.\*
49. Better and more accurate records of children in care should be maintained.\*
50. There should be stability in placements for children in care.
51. Institutions need to respond more quickly to reports of suspected abuse.

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\*This indicates that a recommendation was made by more than one person.

## Acknowledgement and Recognition

52. Institutions and those working in institutions should acknowledge having made mistakes and should take organizational and personal accountability.
53. Institutions should demonstrate a change in attitude toward victims of abuse and should state publicly what will change in future.
54. Institutions should roll up their sleeves and demonstrate their commitment to change by supporting survivor-led and survivor-inspired initiatives.\*

## The Justice System

55. Sentences for those who sexually abuse children and youth should be longer or stricter.\*
56. The Parole Board should continue to inform victims of their abuser's application for parole so victims can relay their concerns.
57. Vulnerable witnesses should be allowed to bring a "teddy bear" with them to the stand in testifying, to provide emotional support.
58. There needs to be recognition that the justice system in Cornwall has been affected and that work is needed to heal this.
59. Institutions need to increase communications or to communicate properly in order to address rumours.
60. Every effort should be made for accuracy in victim statements.
61. Parents who attend criminal trials where their children give testimony regarding abuse should have a right to time off work for attendance and should receive compensation for lost income.
62. There should be judicial training on the significant impact of abuse and in particular on the impact of historical abuse.
63. Laws regarding response to abuse should be more consistent across Canada.
64. Court systems should be more responsive to the needs of children and youth in abusive situations.
65. There should be an increase in the "pain and suffering" award at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.
66. Persons who are mentally ill should not be taken to correctional facilities or detention centres but held in facilities where they can get compassionate and appropriate treatment.

## Other

67. There should be an investigation of the Cornwall Public Inquiry, and how it was set up, and how its mandate was established.
68. There should be a replacement of one local institution, with new, independent staff put in place. In future, there should be independent compliance officers in every institution to ensure that they follow their own policies.



*The artist of this sketch portrays the isolation and loneliness of the abused child, but also, by looking outward, conveys the seeking of help and hope.*

## Conclusion: Voices Heard

I am concluding this special volume of the Report of the Cornwall Public Inquiry by reflecting on some of my key recommendations in Volume 2 of my Report, which covers Phase 2. Many of these recommendations address points raised in informal testimony. I want to say to people who came forward in informal testimony, “Your voices have been heard.”

A significant aspect of my Phase 2 Report addresses Counselling Support. I make very specific recommendations about transition for Counselling Support provided through the Cornwall Public Inquiry. I have also looked at the province-wide issue of availability of services for those who have been abused, and I discuss services for men specifically.

I also focus in my Phase 2 Report on education and awareness—for the public, for professionals, at work, at home, and at play. Such awareness and education includes measures to increase sensitivity and understanding of the impact and consequences of sexual abuse: for those who have been abused, for their families, for those in workplaces where abuse has occurred, and for those whose jobs entail dealing with victims of abuse.

I have looked at recommendations for Cornwall that could support and enhance respectful and constructive relationships between survivors and their community. I have made recommendations aimed at creating more victim-friendly approaches in the justice system, to ensure that future generations benefit from the lessons of the past. Specific examples of concrete responses include my recommendations on the Adult Community Healing Resource Centre and for a Family and Child Advocacy Centre for Cornwall.

Many who spoke in informal testimony spoke of the power of making a difference. I think some of the changes you have championed can make a difference. Thank you for coming forward to informal testimony.



## Information Provided about Informal Testimony

### Non-Evidentiary Informal Testimony in Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry

There is an opportunity to tell your story—in your own words—in a private setting.

Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry, which deals with healing and reconciliation in Cornwall, has developed processes for people to give informal testimony, as part of a process of healing.

Anyone who is touched by the Cornwall Public Inquiry can decide to come forward and be heard by two members of the Cornwall Public Inquiry Advisory Panel. The opportunities are available starting in mid-June 2008, *and were originally to end in mid-November 2008 but will extend to December 18, 2008.*

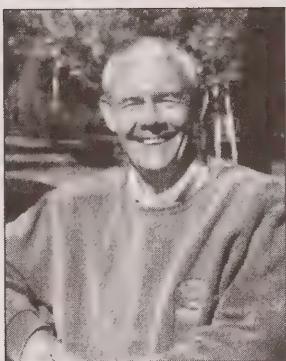
Want to know the background of the available panel members? Have questions? Want to have an idea of what to think about ahead of time? Want to “walk through” the process so you know what is involved?

Please review the material posted on this site (below). We have tried to help you with information, but the decision to participate is yours. We respect your decision.

Want to register for a session? Contact Lori Loseth at 613.938.7102 or [lori.loseth@ontario.ca](mailto:lori.loseth@ontario.ca). She will arrange for someone to call you.

Interested in support available for this, or just have other questions about these informal opportunities? Please contact Patrick Lechasseur at 613.938.6640 or [patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca](mailto:patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca).

- Panel members available to hear your story in Phase 2
- Questions and Answers
- Walk through Informal Testimony
- Things to Think About—Informal Testimony



## MICHAEL CHURCH (FREELTON)

Mike is an active volunteer on behalf of men who have suffered sexual abuse. He is a survivor of sexual abuse as a youth but did not get the help that he wants every man to get until he was fifty-six. His work has included providing peer support as a trained mentor and speaking about the impact of sexual abuse to meetings of police forces, hospital staff, schools, and service clubs. He has been a keynote speaker or workshop participant at

Ontario conferences of male survivors and has also advocated for change on behalf of those who have experienced childhood or adolescent sexual abuse. He has found that raising awareness has aided professionals in recognizing symptoms of childhood abuse and supported men who have experienced abuse but thought they were alone. Mike retired in December 2005, after over forty years of progressively responsible working experience, both at a major Canadian bank and in the Ontario Government. Mike is proud to indicate that he recently celebrated his forty-first wedding anniversary.



## JAN HANDY (TORONTO)

Jan is the Executive Director of the Gatehouse®, a Child Abuse Investigation and Support Site. The Gatehouse® represents a unique, independently managed, and community-based volunteer support response centre for people whose lives have been directly impacted by child abuse. As a professional working in the issues of child abuse survivor needs, she has a background in adult education and community development, as well as being

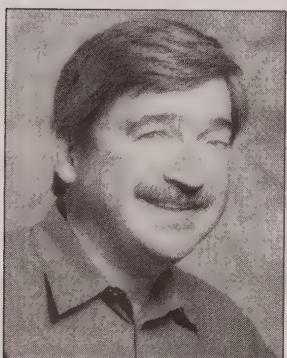
uniquely positioned to respond to the issues of child abuse, having experienced the impacts of abuse herself. As the primary author of *Enhancing Resilience in Adults*, Jan has been instrumental in developing The Gatehouse Adult Support Network™ training program, an extensive education and community support network for adults who have experienced child abuse. She holds Masters Degrees in Divinity and Education and has been a professional development trainer in several venues, such as The Anglican Church of Canada, Children's Aid Societies, and with early childhood educators. One of seven children and an accomplished artist, Jan now shares her life with her partner, her dog Mikey, and three cats: Charlie, Angel, and Moxy.



### DR. BENJAMIN HOFFMAN (EGANVILLE)

Ben is a specialist in negotiation, mediation, and peace-building. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. (Psychology) from Wilfrid Laurier University, an M.A. in International Relations from Tufts University, and a Ph.D. from York University, UK. He also specialized in International Peacemaking at the Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation. Ben's interest in mediation began in correctional services in Northern Ontario and grew over

the last thirty years to include healing and restorative justice work in a variety of national and international settings. He played a central role in the Helpline Healing and Reconciliation Model Agreement between men who, as boys, were physically and sexually abused in St. Joseph's and St. John's Training Schools, and he recorded the stories of those touched by the abuse in a book titled *The Search for Healing, Reconciliation and The Promise of Prevention*. Ben is currently active in violence prevention and reconciliation in Cornwall, in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa and in Sri Lanka. From 2000 to 2003, he was Director of the Conflict Resolution Program at The Carter Center, acting as President Jimmy Carter's representative, focusing on efforts to end the nineteen-year-old war in Sudan and reconciliation in Northern Uganda. Dr. Hoffman is called upon to provide mediation, peacebuilding advice, and to lecture to a wide range of clients throughout the world.



### PETER JAFFE (LONDON)

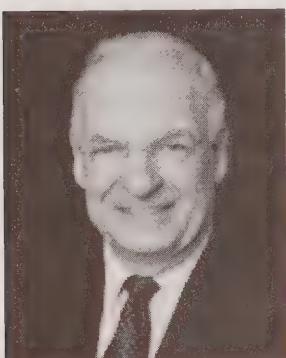
Peter is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. He is a clinical psychologist with extensive experience working with child sexual abuse victims. He has been involved in both teaching and research in this area and has a substantial research and teaching background. Peter has also served his community on the Thames Valley District School Board as both a Trustee and past Chair. He grew up in Montreal but has lost his French speaking skills after thirty-eight years in London. He is married and has four sons.



## GAIL KANEB (CORNWALL)

Gail is a businesswoman and a certified Shadow Work® coach who works extensively with the Young Presidents' Organization and several philanthropic organizations. She helps people and organizations reach their full potential by leading them to address areas where they may block themselves. As President of Breakthrough Strategies, Gail shares leadership, communication and conflict management strategies used in her own business

as well as her family life as a spouse and parent of three. Gail has founded and sat on numerous community boards. She and her husband Tom were co-chairs of the "Our Hospital, Our Future" fundraising campaign, and have received honourary diplomas from St. Lawrence College for their work in the Cornwall community.



## PHILIP MURRAY (OTTAWA)

Phil was Commissioner of the RCMP between 1994 and 2000, retiring in September 2000. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration and Certificate in Personnel Administration from the University of Regina, Saskatchewan. He is a graduate of the Canadian Police College Advanced Police Studies Program, and a graduate of the United States FBI National Executive Institute. Phil served with the RCMP for thirty-eight

years, experiencing a broad range of operational policing and management responsibilities, progressing from a uniformed peace officer to the most senior position of RCMP Commissioner. While Commissioner, Phil championed restorative justice, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and mediation as important concepts in the justice system and in the RCMP response to community problems. Since retirement, Phil has served as a member of the Research Advisory Committee for the Ipperwash Public Inquiry. He also serves his community as a member of the Board of the Ottawa Hospital, member of the Board of Garda World Security, member of the Board of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre and as Honorary Patron for the RCMP Heritage Centre.



## COLLEEN PARRISH (TORONTO)

Colleen Parrish has held the position of Director of Policy of the Cornwall Public Inquiry for the past two years. In addition, Colleen has thirty years of senior management experience in the areas of policy, research and management of complex issues.

Beginning in 1976, she has worked for the Ontario government on major policy change initiatives including family law reform, group home policies, reforms to

laws related to financial institutions, compensation funds related to failed financial institutions, pension reform, rent regulation, and social housing. Most of her work has resulted in positive changes to public policy. Colleen supervised significant research mandates for financial institutions and housing policies, drawing together experts from many fields and professional disciplines and consulting with the public.

Colleen also has substantial experience in operations and management, as a founding Trustee of the OPSEU Pension Trust and, later, serving as its first President. The OPTrust is one of the country's largest pension plans with more than \$10 billion in assets and over 74,000 members and pensioners. She retired from the OPTrust in September 2005.

Colleen is the mother of two children in their twenties.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS—TELLING YOUR STORY

### INFORMAL TESTIMONY IN PHASE 2 OF THE CORNWALL PUBLIC INQUIRY

#### **Q: Who can give informal testimony?**

A: Anyone affected by the Cornwall Public Inquiry or the issues arising at the Inquiry. Anyone who has been sexually abused as a child or young person in the Cornwall and Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry area.

#### **Q: Is it just for people who were sexually abused as children or youth?**

A: No. Anyone who believes they are affected by the Inquiry or issues that arise at the Inquiry can give informal testimony.

#### **Q: Why would I want to do this—to tell my story?**

A: Many people find it therapeutic to tell their story in a supportive environment. It is part of the process of facing the past and healing. It can reduce the burden of anger, guilt, shame or frustration by explaining what happened and the life impact or life journey. People often find that their sense of isolation and loneliness is much less after talking. It can take away the weight of secrecy. It can take away a feeling of being misunderstood. Some people find a process of giving informal testimony is a way to put a difficult past in perspective—and look forward with hope.

#### **Q: Can what I say in these sessions be used in a court or to make a finding that someone treated me wrongly?**

A: No. What you say is informal—it is not part of a civil or criminal court process or part of a hearings process. What you say is important and will be treated that way—but as a process of healing, not a court process. And that is the same for the Advisory Panel members—what they say cannot be part of a court process.

#### **Q: Who can I talk to about what is involved and when I could do this, if I decide I want to go ahead?**

A: You can talk to Patrick Lechasseur at 613.938.6640 or [patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca](mailto:patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca).

**Q: I am a survivor and am interested but still not sure. Would this help me?**

A: This is something you need to decide. If it would help to talk to someone who is a survivor, has done this in the past, and is an Advisory Panel member, we can arrange for a telephone conversation or face-to-face meeting. You can just talk about whether this would help you—nothing else, just what you feel comfortable talking about. And you could also talk to your own counsellor.

Then you decide if you want to talk to someone who has told the story of their journey from abuse to healing, call Colleen Parrish at 613.938.2127 or email her at [colleen.parrish@ontario.ca](mailto:colleen.parrish@ontario.ca) and she will arrange the telephone call or meeting.

**Q: If I decide to go ahead and give informal testimony, how long are the sessions?**

A: Up to 2 hours. This includes a brief introduction process and a farewell at the end. But most of the session is for you to talk. It is your time.

**Q: When are the sessions—I am concerned that I cannot come at certain times because of work or other family responsibilities.**

A: If you need an evening or weekend session, ask and we will set it up.

**Q: What's the time period for doing these sessions to informally tell my story?**

A: Sessions started in June 2008 and were originally going to end November 18, 2008. They have been extended to December 18, 2008.

**Q: Who will be at this session listening to my account?**

A: There will be two Advisory Panel members. You will be given a list with pictures and a description of their background. If there is someone you do not want, that person will not come. If there is someone you particularly want, we will try to have them at your session. There will be two or three other staff in attendance to provide support or keep records, if you want a summary prepared. And you can bring up to five people that you want to have with you.

**Q: If I do not like any of the panel members, can I pick someone else?**

A: Not in this process.

**Q: Can I bring some people with me?**

A: Yes—up to 5 people—friends or family, or your counsellor. They should be prepared to listen to you—it's your time. If you want, they could add to what you are saying—but only if you want this to happen.

**Q: Can I bring the media?**

A: No. This is a private event.

**Q: Can I bring my counsellor?**

A: Yes. They will be paid up to three hours that day to support you if they have the relevant skills and training.

**Q: If I like some of the panel members at my session, can I ask for them to be my counsellor?**

A: No. Panel members cannot act as counsellors for those who have given informal testimony. They are there to listen and support, but are not providing counselling. But—if you want a counsellor, we can help you find one who is right for you. Please contact Patrick Lechasseur at 613.938.6640 or by email at patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca.

**Q: Can I bring my lawyer?**

A: Yes. But your lawyer will not be paid by the Inquiry except as part of a discretionary approval by staff of the Inquiry. This must be approved in advance. It would be part of something we call “Witness Support” at the Inquiry.

**Q: Will someone ask me questions?**

A: Not usually. This is your time so you can say what you want. But it may be that the Panel member will help you if it appears you need some coaching or support in giving an account of your experiences. But it is your story. The idea is to help you, but not “cross examine” or push you, or challenge you.

**Q: Will someone be recording what I say?**

A: Only if you ask for a summary to be prepared. If you do not want a summary there will be no recording. If there is a summary, any recording will be destroyed once the summary is written.

**Q: Will I see my summary before it is final?**

A: Yes. You can see a draft and comment on it.

**Q: What happens to summaries?**

A: The summaries will be published as part of the Phase 2 report of the Cornwall Public Inquiry. The Commissioner of the Inquiry will see the summaries before publication, but after the Phase 1 part of his Report is sent for printing.

**Q: Will my summary include my name or something that could let people know who I am?**

A: No—your summary is anonymous. If you think there is something in the summary that will identify you to others, you can get this taken out when you review the summary.

**Q: Will the summary have the name of those people who have treated me badly?**

A: No. The summaries will not give names of individuals.

**Q: Will the summary have the name of people I want to praise or recognize?**

A: No names will be included but the summary could refer generally to a person (such as my wife, son, counsellor, etc.).

**Q: Is there other support available for informal testimony?**

A: Yes. This includes assistance with transportation, advance orientation, personal support and escort, and liaison with Counselling Support. You can ask for only one part of the supports available (e.g. transportation expenses for you or one support person) or you can ask for a full range of services. You can talk about it with the Witness Support Coordinator, Patrick Lechasseur about what is available and what you want. These supports are like those given to witnesses in Phase 1 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry (the hearings).

**Q: Who provides this support?**

A: A staff member at the Cornwall Public Inquiry. Usually it is Patrick Lechasseur (613.938.6640 or patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca) but sometimes another person fills this role.

**Q: Where will the sessions be held?**

A: In a private, comfortable place in Cornwall. It will not look like a hearing room. It will be more like a living room but there will be a desk or table to sit at. If you decide to go ahead, we can show you the room before you come to give your informal testimony if you want. If requested, we can arrange for a session in another city.

**Q: I do not live in Cornwall and want people to come to me to hear my story. Can this happen?**

A: Yes, it can be arranged for locations in Ontario.

**Q: Is there anything else I should know?**

A: Yes. If you tell people in your session that you are at serious risk of harming yourself or others, we will have to report this.

Also, if you tell us of a child at risk, we will report this to the Children's Aid Society where he or she lives. In doing this, we will have to say where we got this information.

These are legal requirements.

## **WALKING THROUGH INFORMAL TESTIMONY— WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE TO TELL YOUR STORY IN PHASE 2 OF THE CORNWALL PUBLIC INQUIRY?**

### **STEP ONE: Deciding to give informal testimony.**

You should ask questions, talk to supportive people in your life and decide what you want to do. There is no pressure—it's your choice. You can talk to others who have done this and found it helpful to healing. If you want to go ahead a book a time, contact Lori Loseth at 613.938.7102 or lori.loseth@ontario.ca. If you are not sure and just want to talk about what's involved or maybe talk to someone who has had a similar experience, contact Patrick Lechasseur at 613.938.6640 or patrick.lechasseur@ontario.ca or Colleen Parrish at 613.938.2127 or colleen.parrish@ontario.ca.

### **STEP TWO: Getting ready to give your account, tell your story.**

You can ask to meet with Cornwall Public Inquiry staff and walk through what is involved. If you want, you can see the place where it will happen. You should think about who on the Advisory Panel you want to receive your informal testimony—if there is Advisory Panel member you do not want or one you prefer. You should think about who you want to bring with you to support you. If you have a counsellor, you may ask them to help you prepare emotionally. You may want to make some notes of the key things you want to say, so that you remember them. You should decide if you want a written summary.

### **STEP THREE: The day of informal testimony.**

If you have asked for escort as part of the support we provide through the Inquiry, you will be picked up or a taxi arranged. If you and your supporters come independently, you will be greeted at the place where testimony occurs. You will be told ahead of time where this is.

### **STEP FOUR: Introduction to everyone who is there.**

The Advisory Panel members receiving informal testimony will introduce everyone and make you feel at home. A Panel member will make sure everyone understands the timing and what to expect and emphasize that the time is for you. They may intervene to help you through your testimony—but will not “cross-examine” you.

**STEP FIVE: You give your account.**

You can speak as you wish, say what you want. If you want, you can ask those with you to speak too—but only if it is OK with you.

**STEP SIX: Wrap up.**

About 15 minutes before the end, you will be reminded of the time so you can finish up any key points. You will be acknowledged and thanked.

**STEP SEVEN: Leaving.**

If you need an escort or taxi home, this is provided. If you have transportation costs, you will get an expense form so you can claim for the money. If you are some distance away, overnight accommodation can be arranged in Cornwall.

**STEP EIGHT: After informal testimony.**

If you have asked for a written summary, it will be provided in confidence for your review. Remember, your summary is anonymous and cannot identify a person. For legal reasons, some material may not be included—but orally, you can say what you want. When your summary is final, after your review, you will get a copy. If you have asked for liaison with Counselling Support, you will get a call afterward to see if you want ongoing counselling. If you have someone else you want to talk to after the informal testimony, call Colleen Parrish or Patrick Lechasseur at the Cornwall Public Inquiry.

If you decided to have a summary, your summary will be published as part of the Phase 2 report of the Cornwall Public Inquiry. It will then be public and others will read it. Of course, it will be anonymous.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN GETTING READY FOR INFORMAL TESTIMONY OR TELLING YOUR STORY IN PHASE 2 OF THE CORNWALL PUBLIC INQUIRY

**Your time in giving informal testimony is for you. So you can talk about what you want to talk about.**

**But—your time is limited. So you may want to think ahead to make sure you said what you really wanted to say.**

Here are some things you could think about. It is your decision—but other people have found these things useful in getting ready to tell their story.

### *Think about who you want to bring with you*

Remember, you can bring friends or family or your counsellor—up to 5 people.

- Do you want to bring someone who knows your story and will support you emotionally at the time and after?
- Do you want to bring someone who does not know your story—or the whole story—but it is important to you that they know?
- Do you want to bring a professional support such as a counsellor, as part of your process of therapy or other professional involved in an activity important to you?
- Are you comfortable that those who are coming will respect your privacy and the rules for non-evidentiary opportunities, and will hear and accept what you say? Will they understand this is your time to speak—not theirs?

### *Think about dividing up the time for talking—there is no more than 2 hours, including introductions of everyone there*

You may want to think about how much time you want to spend on:

- The incidents of your abuse or abuse of a family member (remember you do not have to give details, but you can if it helps you)
- Explaining what happened, if your issue is not an incident of abuse but another impact on your personal or professional life, related to the issues dealt with at the Inquiry

You may want to make sure you save time to talk about how abuse or the incident you want to talk about has affected your life:

- With your family as a child or youth
- At school
- With friends
- With girlfriends/boyfriends, husbands, wives or partners
- With your children
- At work
- In terms of your health
- In terms of people in authority such as police, government officials
- In terms of your spiritual life.

Do you want to talk about who *did not* help you?

- You may indicate you sought or hoped for help but did not get it and the impact this had on your life or parts of your life.

Do you want to talk about who *did* help you?

- You may want to take the opportunity to say “thank you” to those who supported you and cared about you in hard times in the past, even if they are not in the room.
- You may want to thank those who are with you today or those helping you today.

Do you want to talk about any legal processes you went through related to the abuse or the incident or situation you are talking about?

Remember—you can say the name of a person in telling your story, but the name will not be reported in any summary.

### ***Think about your Accomplishments***

It is important to think about what has been accomplished in your life. You may want to think about talking about:

- What you have done as a family member or friend to care for and support others
- Your education, career or work accomplishments
- Your contributions to your community
- Your personal interests, hobbies and abilities.

### ***Think about your Future***

You may want to talk about:

- Lessons in your life that could help others
- Your hopes for the future
- Your plans for the future and what you need to make those plans happen for you or others.















**This item is accompanied by a CD-ROM.**

**Please inquire at the Reference Desk on the  
4<sup>th</sup> floor for access to the CD-ROM**

# REPORT OF THE Cornwall Inquiry



Ontario

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